Labour Monthly

EDITED BY R. PALME DUTT

NOTES OF THE MONTH

Problems of the Peace Movement

POLLITT & STRACHEY

The People's Front

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Engineers versus the Government

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LABOUR MONTHLY

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NOTES OF THE MONTH

Problems of the Peace Movement—Scarborough and Bristol—Peace Alliance Vote—From Scarborough to Stafford—Future of the Peace Alliance—National Peace Congress—The Real Issue—Policy or Negation—Political Realities—Chamberlain and the Peace Movement—Pacifism and Fascism—Non-Resistance—Fascist Penetration in Peace Movement—Glaring Facts—The First Necessity—Urgent Questions—Failures to Answer—The Positive Programme—Programmes and Unity

AS we approach once more the anniversary of the fateful date when the world entered into war in 1914, the thoughts of all are concerned with the menacing prospect of the coming months. To whichever side we turn, whether in Spain or the Far East, the bombing of British ships in the Mediterranean or Hitler's threat to Czechoslovakia and Hungary in Central Europe, it is clear that the menace of the situation and the advance of open war operations grows greater and not less. The check to Hitler on May 21 by the successful demonstration of collective security of France, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, saved peace in Central Europe for the time being. But Britain still refuses to join that collective peace stand, and exercises pressure on Czechoslovakia to withdraw its troops and surrender to Hitler. Therefore the danger continues acute. We are in consequence faced with a situation which requires from all serious supporters of peace in Britain, not abstract long-term policies or philosophical discussions, but immediate practical decisions if war is to be checked and its extension prevented. The reality of fascist war governs the question of war or peace. This is the issue which needs now to be brought home to all supporters of peace in Britain, and which underlies the present so-called crisis of the peace movement, accompanying and corresponding to the advance of the international crisis.

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HOW are the supporters of peace in Britain, whether in the Labour movement or beyond it, meeting this urgent situation ? Two decisions of recent conferences throw a light on the answer to this question. The Co-operative Congress at Scarborough, the most widely representative body of the Labour movement, considered the plan adopted by the Co-operative Party for a United Peace Alliance to defeat Chamberlain and establish a Government which could range Britain with the Peace *Bloc*, and rejected it by 4,492,000 to 2,382,000 votes. The National Peace Congress at Bristol, representing miscellaneous pacifist elements with some Labour organisations, and gathering about 750 delegates from 400 very varied organisations, rejected the resolution presented it by the platform and broke up without reaching any decision on the main questions of policy. These two negative results show that there is far from readiness yet to meet the urgency of the present situation. They are a picture of disorganisation There is not yet a clear common policy of advance.

BUT both these negative results contain a positive element. The two-and-one-third million votes for the Peace Alliance at Scarborough represent a powerful body of opinion which cannot be gainsaid its right to expression and which will be able (as in the previous fight of the minority against the official policy of support for " non-intervention " in Spain) to win the majority to the correctness of its policy. The rejection of the platform resolution at Bristol (a resolution which excluded collective security or the Peace *Bloc*, and to which amendments were refused) was accompanied by a declaration from delegates representing a quarter-of-a-million members to the effect that, since any amendment was refused, this was the only way in which the Conference could express its desire for a stand for the policy of collective security and the Peace *Bloc*. Thus both results reveal a measure of advance behind the negative outcome, though not sufficient for the urgency of the situation.

SCARBOROUGH'S vote has been received with jubilation by supporters of the Government and by opponents of unity in the Labour movement. That " only " two and one

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third million organised workers, or a little more than the total affiliated membership of the Labour Party, should have voted for the Peace Alliance, after a campaign of every conceivable pressure and threat from headquarters, seemed to them a great victory. In an editorial whose hysterical ecstacy aroused comment, because it laid bare with too indecent revelation the one issue that arouses fervour from official quarters and the one enemy that is regarded as the real enemy, the *Daily Herald* proclaimed the Peace Alliance " dead, dead, dead." Unfortunately the next day revealed what had been killed. What had been killed was the upward swing of the by-elections against Chamberlain. For the first by-election since the general election Stafford revealed a fall in the Labour vote alongside a rise in the Labour vote. This was the rare and refreshing fruit of Scarborough. Following the Co-operative Party vote at Easter for the Peace Alliance there had been a marked upward swing in the by-election vote against the Government, although the division of the opposition vote had prevented the winning of seats, and even in the case of West Derbyshire given away to the Government candidate an increased majority on a minority vote. Then came Scarborough, and its well-aimed blow struck Labour's advance for the moment dead. It is not surprising that Chamberlain should be pleased with this outcome. It is more surprising that any responsible member of the Labour Party should be pleased.

ON the future of the fight for the People's Front or Peace Alliance after Scarborough, John Strachey writes in the current issue. There is no doubt that what Sydney Elliott wrote in last month's LABOUR MONTHLY remains true, despite Scarborough's adverse vote, that " the great cause of the United Peace Alliance grows and grows, and is destined to dominate democratic politics for months ahead." Such an advance of the conception of the People's Front in the British political situation is inevitable, because the conception does not represent any sectional proposal, but corresponds to the realities and increasing needs of the situation. Facts cannot be conjured out of existence by a conference vote ; and just

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as Stafford gave the immediate comment on Scarborough, so every event of the international situation in the coming months will further drive home the urgency of the People's Front. The basis of support already won gives confidence for future victory. Undoubtedly the *Times* was correct in commenting on Scarborough that " Not the rejection of the united front by the Co-operative Congress, but the size of the minority deserves the more attention." What is important now is to maintain and extend the freedom of discussion of this issue, which can by no means be treated as an old and settled question, but is only beginning to open out in its full scope before the whole Labour movement.

IF we turn to the situation of the general peace movement, as revealed at the National Peace Congress at Bristol, there are important lessons to be learned for the future. The decision of the Bristol Congress, rejecting the main resolution submitted by the platform by a vote of 105 to 73, has been universally interpreted by the press as a " split " of the peace movement. This is a misleading description of the actual situation. No split in any formal or organisational sense took place to break the extremely loose association of bodies participating in the National Peace Congress or affiliated to the National Peace Committee ; and the desire was expressed on all sides to find the most effective basis to build up and carry forward the strongest possible unity of the peace forces in this country. The negative vote was a step forward in the process of clarification towards finding this basis for an effective united peace movement. But it is undoubtedly true that a very serious issue has now to be faced, as the cross-section of opinion represented at Bristol clearly showed, by the existing extremely weak and heterogenous peace movement as at present organised, if greater effectiveness and a stronger mass basis is to be achieved in the future ; and the negative vote at Bristol was a definite condemnation of all attempts, however well-intentioned, to sidestep the issue.

WHAT is this issue ? It is commonly expressed as the issue between the policy of collective security and the abstract pacifism of non-resistance. This was not directly

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the central issue of the controversy at Bristol, although this familiar division of opinion and alignment among supporters of peace plays an important part in the situation. The central issue of controversy at Bristol (and supporters of collective security were to be found on both sides of the controversy) was whether the peace movement should have a policy at all: that is, whether the peace movement should endeavour as a united movement to have a positive policy for peace in relation to the wars and war situation now developing, or should remain, in view of divergences of opinion existing, a loose heterogeneous self-contradictory association of individuals and groupings united only in the sentiment of the desire for peace, but without any positive policy to meet the advance of the war forces or attempt to take a common stand in relation to the urgent political issues of the present war situation.

THE latter was the situation of the peace movement before 1914; and in consequence it counted only as thistledown in a hurricane when 1914 came. The sentiment for peace, however noble, is impotent, valueless and meaningless—and *its abstract propaganda self-deception and practical assistance* to the warmakers—unless it is translated into a positive and concrete programme, policy and organisation capable of defeating the warmakers and realising peace. This is the burning issue which confronts every man and woman in the peace movement, and which the extension of fascist war makes urgent and immediate to-day. This is the issue which was presented in a memorandum signed by Norman Angell and others to the National Peace Congress:

> In our view it is time for the Peace Movement of this country, as represented by its National Congress, to arrive at a definite and comprehensive policy. In its efforts to reconcile varying points of view, it has, by its refusal to enunciate any clear policy of resistance, been placed in the unhappy position of appearing to acquiesce in or condone evil and warlike aggressions. . . .
>
> To adopt a negative or neutral policy under existing circumstances is not to preserve peace, but to make war certain.

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THE real question facing the peace movement is a practical question governed by the realities of the present political situation. What are these realities? The war forces are steadily extending and advancing. They are advancing, not because they represent the majority, but because the peace forces are divided and disorganised, because the will of the overwhelming majority of the peoples for peace is not yet translated into a policy and organisation capable of realising peace. Fascism is extending its wars for seven years now against one people after another; and this advance is already bringing close the menace of general world war. What is the answer of the peace movement to meet this situation? A peace movement which has no policy to meet this real situation of extending war has ceased to exist as a peace movement; by its passivity and acquiescence it becomes an accomplice of the war offensive. Individual moralities are here no substitute for a political policy. A policy is not judged by the subjective intentions of its authors, but by its results. A policy which facilitates and assists the extension of war is a war policy, by whatever name it may seek to call itself. Only a policy which in fact promotes and strengthens peace is a peace policy. How can the will of the peoples for peace be organised in such a way as to check the extending fascist war aggression without leading to general war? This question is the touchstone for any peace policy in the realities of to-day.

BUT this question presents itself in a still sharper form for the peace movement in Britain. For it is the peculiarity of the situation in Britain that the extreme reactionary "National" Government has worked continuously, and now works more openly than ever before under Chamberlain, to align the British people closely with the fascist Powers, to disrupt any democratic peace front or League of Nations stand, and to smooth the path for fascist war aggression against the democratic peoples (and eventually, as they hope, against the Soviet Union), so as to divert it away from the British Empire and against those whom the magnates of the City regard as dangerous to their interests. This policy, which is a brutal, callous and reckless policy in support of war, is

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presented to the British people in the guise of "peace", as a policy of "keeping Britain out", of "non-intervention" and of "conciliation" with the fascist Powers. Where does the peace movement stand in relation to this policy of Chamberlain? This is the touchstone for pacifism in Britain to-day.

IT is here that arise the most alarming indications of certain tendencies in the peace movement in Britain to-day which require to be frankly faced. The danger inherent at all times in bourgeois pacifism, because it is divorced from class understanding, because it is divorced from the working class movement, is to become the unconscious tool of bourgeois policy, and thereby of war policy, and even the best helper of cunningly presented war aims. To give one atom of support to Chamberlain's policy, to assist under whatever arguments his aim of the passivity and paralysis of the British people and sabotage of any democratic peace front so as to leave a free path for fascist war, of his "conciliation" with the fascist Powers which covers in practice connivance and encouragement for their aggression, means in reality to help, not peace, but the bloodiest war offensive the world has known and the most criminal reactionary Government in Britain which is fostering it. Yet voices in favour of this policy are making themselves heard in influential places in the peace movement in this country. That such a situation should be possible, that this tendency has not been immediately repudiated by the entire organised peace movement of whatever alignment, is a fact which should cause burning shame and indignation to every sincere member of a peace organisation in Britain. If this tendency is not immediately fought and defeated, far more energetically than has yet been the case, the peace movement of this country will be in danger of being turned into a propaganda agency of Hitler, Mussolini and Chamberlain—the most dangerous war-forces in the world.

THIS, and not any abstract philosophical issue, is the real urgent menace which underlies the propaganda of so-called "pure pacifism" or abstract pacifism that has been pushed forward very actively in Britain in the last few years

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(since Hitler came to power) with considerable funds and publicity and with support from certain sections of the upper class and of the fashionable literary intelligentsia. The philosophical standpoint of non-resistance has always existed in the pacifist movement, and has held an honoured place, when represented by those few who have genuinely striven to live according to its tenets. We who are Marxists cannot share that viewpoint, and would consider it a disaster if it were capable of winning any wide influence in the working class or in any democratic movement so as to disarm them before their oppressors. But we can fully respect those very few who, like Tolstoy in his old age, have genuinely striven, with all the consequent agonies and dilemmas of self-contradiction, to divest themselves from the basis of violence, that is, in the first place to divest themselves from the basis of property (the rich preacher of non-violence, who is living on the spoils of violence, and is thus in reality only preaching to his slaves to be passive and servile, is a less pleasing picture).

BUT there are other tendencies at work in the recent mushroom growth, during the fascist period, of the Peace Pledge Union, which the tens of thousands of simple adherents who have joined on the elementary basis of their personal pledge not to take part in war, have scarcely yet realised. We are quite confident that the majority of members who have joined this body have sought only to declare their determined opposition to war, without any intention to cut themselves off from the general democratic movement, that they would be horrified if they realised what their leaders are doing and advocating in their name, and that, in proportion as they do realise it, they will increasingly combat it and find their way to face the wider political problems of the fight against war which they wish to undertake. It is necessary to state plainly that in the leadership of the Peace Pledge Union there is, consciously or unconsciously, alliance with fascism in practical policy. No one who studies the record of the declarations and acts of its leaders can reach any other conclusion. It is no less clear in some of the more sophisticated and expensive writings of its ideologues.

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HITLER and Mussolini are perfectly well aware of this and of its value to them. When a prominent leader of the Peace Pledge Union is received with pomp and ceremony and a blaze of press publicity (not to mention armed guards of honour, with daggers and skull and crossbones complete) by Hitler and Mussolini, who would strike down without mercy any representative of the same tendency in their own countries, is it not obvious to the meanest intelligence what this means, and why Hitler and Mussolini find this of inestimable value to them and their war plans ? When the British Embassies work overtime to facilitate these visits, is it not obvious that we have here a part of the diplomatic machinery of Chamberlain, preparing the way for his precious treaties which stink in the nostrils of every decent democrat and supporter of peace ? When the entire democratic and social democratic press of the European countries, and not least the illegal anti-fascist press of the countries visited, cry out in agony at the significance of these visits in relation to the oppressed and threatened peoples, while all the praise comes from the black reactionary and even open fascist press (" We must express our admiration. . . .Lansbury is courageously showing the way " : *Blackshirt*, April 24, 1937), is it not obvious on which side of the barricades these representatives are placing themselves ? When in Parliament every labour and democratic protest at Chamberlain's infamous policy is constantly broken by praise and adulation from the leadership of the Peace Pledge Union at his closer approach to fascism, is it not obvious that we have here the voice of fascism and Chamberlain in the midst of the opposition benches ? Even at the Bristol Peace Congress, when a resolution was adopted that " Congress repudiates the proposal to recognise the so-called conquest of Abyssinia, and views with abhorrence the rôle played by H.M. Government as the sponsor and advocate of this proposal ", three hands were held up in opposition, and one of these was the hand of the Chairman of the Peace Pledge Union. Refusal to protest even at Italy's rape of Abyssinia—such is the curious policy of these apostles of " non-violence ". These facts should bring a burning sense of shame to every honest member of the Peace Pledge Union,

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and none should rest until this whole leadership and policy is wiped out from the organisation.

DECISIVE repudiation of the pro-fascist tendency in the peace movement. This is the first elementary necessity if the Peace movement in this country is to become healthy and effective. We do not ask of the supporters of non-violence to change overnight and abandon their tenets; time and experience and the urgency of the needs will help to clear these questions. But we do ask that they refuse to give support and encouragement to the most ruthless apostles of violence in the world's history. And when they have done this, then let us take counsel together what is the best method to check the wars now raging in the world and to prevent the further spread of fascism's war aggression. Here, too, it is not a question of asking any individual to abandon his personal beliefs. But it is necessary to think, and to judge this question, not simply from a personal standpoint, as if it were only a problem of a personal rôle, but on behalf of the whole peace movement, of the peoples, of the democracies, what they should do, and only on this basis and after this judgement to come back to the personal question. The first concern of every supporter of peace should be, not his personal liking or inclination, but what can best help peace.

HITLER and Mussolini invade Spain. Japan spreads death and destruction in China. Hitler threatens Czechoslovakia. What is the answer of the peace movement in Britain? "We will not fight." How will that help the murdered peoples of Spain or China? It is not a question of it being a disputable wrong answer. The answer is in the strictest sense *irrelevant*. It does not bear on the question. Or rather, it does bear on it, but in a very different sense from that intended. For in fact this is the answer Chamberlain wants to be made. It is precisely Chamberlain who endeavours to create the belief that the slightest move by Britain, even to accord normal legal rights to the Spanish Government, or to withhold economic and financial support from the aggressor, would immediately lead to war, and that, since the first

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consideration must be to prevent this, therefore nothing must be done which would in the slightest way impede fascist war and aggression. Chamberlain's propaganda is exactly helped by this answer. But the invaded peoples are not helped; and peace is not helped.

WHAT other answers are offered from those supporters of pacifism who refuse the policy of collective security? "Let us make friends with Hitler and Mussolini." Much joy this will bring to the peoples of Canton and Alicante, and much comfort to the threatened Czechs. But once again Chamberlain is already carrying out this policy. What need of a peace movement if it can only repeat what Chamberlain is already doing? And the results of Chamberlain's policy we can see in the world around. "Let us give Hitler and Mussolini colonies and financial credits." Much joy this will give to the colonial peoples, whose love for the peace movement that is so kindly ready to dispose of them, will become almost equal to their love for Hitler. The advantages accorded to Hitler and Mussolini will enable them to carry on their wars on a larger scale and more successfully. "Let us try a constructive policy: the Van Zeeland Report." The "constructive policy" has always a curious habit (as readers of the acute analysis of the Van Zeeland Report by "League Observer" in last month's LABOUR MONTHLY will remember) of turning into a system of support and financial credits for the aggressor. And so on without end. It is obvious that the attempted answers are never answers; they are only symptoms of the howling void where there is no answer to the most urgent issue of peace or war to-day.

THE more the question is faced, the more it is plain that the only positive policy in the immediate urgent situation to-day is the policy of the Peace Bloc, and that this alone could still check the development of fascist war, without leading to war. It is perfectly true that the possibility of the realisation of this policy turns on the rôle of Britain, and therefore on the defeat of Chamberlain. That is why the policy of the Peace Bloc is necessarily associated with the aim of the United Peace Alliance or People's Front in Britain to return a

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Government capable of carrying out the policy. But it is precisely here that lies the real work of the peace movement. Once the peace movement can cease to be tied to the apron strings of Chamberlain and the Government, once it can come out clearly and without hesitation for a positive policy which is capable of realising peace and will appeal to and win the support of the majority of the population, once it can combine the supporters of peace and various organisations on this basis in a united movement, associated with all the Labour and democratic forces, then at last it can begin to realise its rôle, it can become a power and begin, not merely to express the aspirations for peace, but to make peace a reality.

SPACE prevents at present the fuller treatment of the questions here raised, to which it will be necessary to return. But one point is essential to touch on. It would be impossible, it is objected, to build any common united peace movement on the basis of a positive programme; the degree of unity that has been achieved can only be maintained on a basis of vagueness, ambiguity and avoidance of controversial questions; any positive programme would "split the peace movement from top to bottom". Those who argue in this way are seeing only the existing handfuls of individuals and miscellaneous groups; they are not seeing the masses of people whose support could be won for a united peace movement on the basis of a positive and practical programme; above all, they are not seeing the mass organisations of the labour movement. The existing confusion, ambiguities and divisions repel mass support. The way of advance lies through closer contact of the various sections of the peace movement with the labour organisations, in the localities, through the local peace councils and the like in the first place; but this requires a popular, anti-fascist, anti-Chamberlain policy, clear answers to the urgent present questions how to save peace, and close linking up of the fight with immediate practical local issues, especially in relation to the democratic programme of demands over air raid precautions, machinery and organisation. In this way the danger of either a general split between rival organisations, or the equal danger of a continuance of the

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existing confusion and paralysing hesitations, can be overcome; and it should still be possible to build up a powerful united peace movement in this country (the youth have set an excellent example to the adults) capable of winning the overwhelming majority of existing supporters of peace, drawing in new mass support and playing a real political rôle to assist in the transformation of British policy before it is too late.

R. P. D.

NEW READERS!

—are wanted for this number . .

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Unity and the People's Front

BY HARRY POLLITT

[*This is an abridged report of the speech by Harry Pollitt, given at the London District Congress of the Communist Party of Great Britain, on June* 11, 1938.]

A CALL FOR mass protest is made in a leading article in the *Daily Herald* (June 11) against the present bombing in Spain and China, and against the policy of Chamberlain in permitting this bombing to go on while refusing anti-aircraft guns to the bombed towns. Our Communist Party will support such a campaign of protest to the full. But at the same time it is necessary to declare that so long as Transport House refuses unity, so long as it opposes the People's Front, so long as it carries out the tactics it did in Aylesbury and West Derby, just so long will we continue to get the results we got at Stafford.

These events should assist in bringing home to everyone the importance of understanding the line of this Congress and the line of our Party, and also of how to apply that line. There is certainly need for a better method of work in our organisation, but there is first of all an imperative need to get understanding of and clarity upon the whole line of our fight for unity and the People's Front. If only the problem of methods of work were to be seen, no doubt such methods could be improved, but we would not get the real political results we desire as the result of such a one-sided approach.

Now when we are facing ever new and more complicated problems, it is more necessary than ever to recall again and again the speeches of our comrade Dimitrov at the Seventh World Congress and to study again the decisions and the report of that Congress as a whole. What was the basic line and perspective of the Seventh World Congress ?

1. It laid the foundations for a greater mobilisation of all the workers against capitalism than ever before conceived in the history of the class struggle.

2. It did this on the basis of working-class unity and the People's Front.

3. It expressed the conviction that along these lines fascism and war could be decisively stemmed and checked.

4. It expressed the conviction that out of ever-growing united activities, the unity of all the working-class parties could be achieved and a mass political organisation of the workers established in every country, with a united workers' International.

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5. It expressed the need for strengthening and consolidating the ranks of the Communist Parties.

6. Finally, it gave through all this a perspective of great advances towards power and Socialism.

This line continues to be our basis and our perspective ; we have to apply it to the existing and changing conditions in Britain. It is necessary at this Congress to emphasise how urgent is our task because of the key position that Britain occupies in world politics, and our consequent responsibility to the people of Britain and to the peoples of the whole world.

At our National Party Congress last May, we could only indicate the perspective of the People's Front in general terms. We were in that position because the conditions for its development as an issue in British politics had not yet matured to the stage where it could be dealt with other than in general terms. Now the situation has changed. The People's Front, the United Peace Alliance, call it what you will, has become the main issue in British politics. It has been and is being discussed with an intensity and energy, that no other political issue in the last 20 years has been discussed in labour, democratic and progressive movements of this country.

Despite all that the enemies of unity and the People's Front can do, we express our complete confidence that this year we will have broken down the major obstacles standing in the way of its achievement.

The opposition of the dominant clique in Transport House can be summed up in a sentence. It is not an opposition to the People's Front because of their desire for Socialism, it is not an opposition to the People's Front because they are afraid of losing their independence through an alliance with Liberalism and democrats ; the political basis for their opposition to the People's Front is because their political line is one of unity with Chamberlain and the " National " Government.

In expressing our confidence that we will realise unity, we are under no illusions as to the character of the obstacles to be overcome. Unity will not fall from the skies. It can only be achieved by hard, patient and persistent work, done in the main by the most class conscious and advanced section of the working class, dedicating their every endeavour to carrying through the fight until we have achieved the victory of unity. To do this work it is necessary to acquaint ourselves with the arguments and discussions going on in the factories, in the workers' ranks everywhere, in our own Party branches ; to take serious note of the questions at public meetings, to watch developments in all peace and democratic organisations. This careful attention is necessary in order to see and to understand the various forms which the advance towards the People's Front is taking, both inside and outside the Labour Movement, and to deal with the obstacles that arise.

We want to try and explain one or two things in the hope that such explanation will result in greater clarity among us as to what we are really driving for.

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Firstly, the idea that the People's Front is some newly-devised tactic thrust upon us because of the advent of fascism is totally wrong. The basic principle of the People's Front is the same basic principle underlying the whole theory and practice of Leninism, the need of seeking allies to carry forward the struggle as a whole. Many mistakes, both right and left in our work, arise because of lack of understanding of this basic aspect of our theory and practice.

The People's Front is not a retreat from Socialism. In the present conditions it is the force which not only protects the daily interests of the people, it is at the same time the force which accelerates and intensifies the whole fight for Socialism.

It is wrong to think that the People's Front may now be correct, but that if a revolutionary situation developed it would then have to be abandoned. We need never to forget that even when the fight for power is won, that the dictatorship of the proletariat will be necessary, and that it will rest upon the alliance of the working class with its closest allies in any given country.

Secondly, the People's Front does not endanger the Labour Movement by placing it under the leadership of Churchill, Lloyd George, Eden or Sinclair. No People's Front in Britain is possible or can ever be established as a living reality unless the Labour Movement forms its indestructible basis and driving force. The People's Front is not exclusively an alliance with the Liberals, it is a mass movement of persons who want to defeat the " National " Government and organise a government of a new type. That is, something very different from what we had in 1924 and 1929, parties fighting on different programmes and afterwards reaching uncertain and uneasy agreement. We must realise that no rising class in history ever defeated the ruling class without allies. In the past it was the working class which was the ally, now the centre of gravity has changed, it is now the working class which is the dominant force and which must know how to win allies and how to advance with them.

Much of the distrust that is found in the Labour Movement concerning the middle class and wavering elements is justified and is correct. But we should understand why the middle class possesses these characteristics and not seek to apologize for them or explain them away. We should explain the basis upon which these waverings and vacillations have developed. But it would be political blindness not to see at the same time the tremendous changes that are taking place in important sections of the middle class. The People's Front is not something fixed and static, it progresses to higher stages of development as its supporters are educated in the school of action and experience.

It is not a small thing that practically every writer in Britain either spoke or sent a message to the great meeting at Queens Hall last Wednesday, in support of the common fight against fascism.

But is also true that precisely at the present moment there is need

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for more effective independent Socialist propaganda, in order to show that while the People's Front is absolutely essential to stem the tide of fascism and war and to open the way for advance, by itself, it cannot solve the basic problems that confront the people, to show that the basic solution, the ultimate solution, can come only from the achievement of Socialism.

I believe that if we remember these points, that it will help us to do the practical work that waits to be done in the factories and the trade unions, in an entirely different and a more fruitful way than we have been doing for some time.

The successful carrying through of the line of unity and the People's Front, and the achievement of both our immediate and our final aims, demands the resolute strengthening and consolidation of the Communist Party.

Let us listen to how Dimitrov put this at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International :

> The more the united front of the working class extends, the more will new, complex problems rise before us and the more will it be necessary for us to work on the political and organisational consolidation of our Parties. The united front of the proletariat brings to the fore an army of workers which will be able to carry out its mission if this army is headed by a leading force which will point out its aims and paths. This leading force can *only be a strong proletarian, revolutionary party.*
>
> If we Communists exert every effort to establish a united front, we do this not for the narrow purpose of recruiting new members for the Communist Parties. But we must strengthen the Communist Parties in every way and increase their membership *for the very reason* that we seriously want to strengthen the united front. The strengthening of the Communist Parties is not a narrow Party concern, but the concern of the entire working class.
>
> *The unity, revolutionary coherence and fighting preparedness of the Communist Parties* constitute most valuable capital which belongs not only to us but to the entire working class.

But, if we are to do this, if we are to realise in fact this strengthening and consolidating of our Party, it means ceaseless recruiting of new members, abolishing the fluctuation in Party membership, the better treatment of all the members in the Party, and a better understanding of how to use their capabilities. It means higher standards of financial integrity and responsibility. Two things are urgently necessary : firstly, a more fundamental understanding of Marxism-Leninism, and secondly, a radical change in the life of the branches and the rôle of the branch committees.

In regard to the first, we are not asking for study and education because we are bookworms. We want study and education because we want to help to form and guide the aims of the masses in a concrete way, we want to avoid living fom hand to mouth, to avoid not being able to see the wood for the trees. That is why we are calling for greater attention to Party education and for greater understanding of the

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fundamentals of our Communist principles.

Not one of us, and I emphasise this, not a single one of us whatever our position can afford to neglect constant study and education at this period.

We are all of us responsible leaders, whose every word and action to-day needs to be carefully thought out.

It was Lenin who told us in 1920 that the time for study was so short, that we never know when war would begin, that it was necessary to use all the means available to us in order to improve our political efficiency in the course of carrying through the political struggle.

In dealing with the new problems arising in Britain it is important that we should study the decisions of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International.

Let me draw your attention to this extract from the report of Dimitrov, it bears on the point we are now discussing :

> It must not be forgotten that the more the People's Front movement extends, the more complicated become the tactical problems of the movement, the more necessary is a really Marxist analysis of the situation and the correlation of the fighting forces, the more necessary it is to hold in one's hand the reliable compass of Marxist-Leninist theory.

That is why we are now carrying through a great change in the whole methods of Party education ; why we are trying new forms of education ; precisely in order that we will be able to steer a right course for the masses, leading them into action, and strengthening and consolidating our Party.

Therefore we call for bigger and more effective sales of our literature, of our pamphlets, and of the Marxist classics published by the firm of Lawrence and Wishart.

In particular we ask every member that, in connection with the coming 15th Congress of our Party in September, they should make a special study of the following four books :

The Decisions of the Seventh World Congress.
The Speeches of Dimitrov.
Left Wing Communism.
The Report of our 14th Congress—" *It Can Be Done.*"

We call for more agitation and propaganda, for the better use of our speakers, our writers, our artists, our singers, our poets and our painters. We have in our Party, especially in London, a wealth of talent and genius, anxious to help. Our activity is many-sided, but there is a place for every phase, from the type of banner that stands above my head, to the type of slogan lining the Congress Hall. There is room for it all, from the type of song " The Peat Bog Soldiers " to the people's song " On to Action," from the type of song " Left, Right, Left " to the Crusade Song, " Forging Ahead." There is room for the expression of our many-sided talent, all of which can strengthen the fight of our Party.

All this is bound up with every phase of our mass work. It is more than ever necessary that the main place for this mass work should be

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in the factories and the trade unions. Never must we forget that these are the fortresses we must conquer. To forget this is to pay a price, a price we are paying now. The price is the absence of any big mass movement among the trade unionists. On the one hand to secure their own demands against the employers, and on the other hand to defeat the attempts of Citrine to bring about co-operation with Chamberlain, especially in the armament industries.

Here we emphasise a special point. We must make the trade unionists feel that the People's Front is not some nebulous movement of anybody, but an active mass movement with Labour as its core, which can strengthen the trade unionists in every phase of their struggle to secure their demands. That is the way in which our line for the People's Front should be discussed and explained in the factories and in the trade unions. In this work we believe it is not possible to reap the full results unless we remember at all times, in all circumstances, wherever we are doing our work, that we are Communists. That while we are fighting for the immediate demands of the workers, we are also strengthening and building up the working-class forces for the conquest of power.

There are tendencies to forget this and to put these things in separate compartments. Marx and Engels explained this question to us with brilliant clarity when in 1847 they declared in the Communist Manifesto :

> The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class ; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement.

Now in regard to some of the weaknesses of our Branch life. It is necessary to overcome the lack of contact between the Branch Committees and the membership and to organise our meetings better. Meetings should work to a planned agenda. There should be reports of what our comrades are doing in the trade unions and the factories, and of the Branch Committee's work. Every meeting should discuss some of the political problems facing the Branch, and how to apply the line of the Party. There should be more tactful appeals to attend the meetings and take part in the work. Let it be known exactly what we want volunteers to do, and let us fit in the work with the particular temperament and inclination of the comrades. Then there will be a greater response from conviction and interest and not from a mere sense of duty which robs the work of so much of ultimate fruitful results.

Our Branch leaders as well as our District leaders should have real regard for the capacity and the ability of our members. We must also have a regard for the pockets of our members. So many appeals are made that many excellent comrades do not come to our branch meetings because they feel ashamed that they cannot afford to contribute to the demands constantly being made. We need a more effective check up

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on literature sales and Party dues. I speak feelingly on the subject of the low standard of financial honesty in our Party in relation to literature and to dues which is an absolute scandal and disgrace.

In conclusion, despite the magnitude of our task and the prejudices and opposition we have to overcome, we want to emphasise our conviction that in spite of all enemies we shall win, and unity and the People's Front will be established.

Our path is not easy, our way is not smooth. There are no short cuts. Many obstacles and difficulties have to be overcome. The struggle exacts its toll. The very flower of our Party and its sympathisers in the cause of democracy have paid the supreme price. We must never let the British Battalion of the International Brigade be forgotten. We must help those comrades who come back wounded, and when they are fully recovered we must help them to get jobs ; we must see that the fund which is paying maintenance to the families of these comrades is kept higher than at the present time. For these comrades have a record of valour, of bravery and of heroism that has never been equalled in any battles that have taken place in the history of the world. They are our people, flesh of our flesh and blood of our blood, bound to us by a thousand ties of love and friendship, and we have the right to be proud of them and to shout their achievements and bravery to the skies, so that it shall be a powerful weapon in the movement towards the People's Front.

Some may not be able to go all the way. Some will falter and some capitulate, but the majority are unconquerable and indomitable. That is as true of Britain as it is of the U.S.S.R., Spain or China. History cannot be put back, it can only go forward, though perhaps not quickly enough. That is our responsibility. It is the price of our weakness and mistakes. All over the world the Communists are at their posts. Death cannot frighten or intimidate, but its terror and sacrifice in China and in Spain are a challenge to us.

Comrades have heard me speak of Tortosa before. I repeat it now without any apology. On Good Friday morning I stood in Tortosa where there had been 35,000 inhabitants, and there were exactly seven living people in that little city. The silence was ghastly, unearthly and deathly. Two of us wandered and turned a corner. There we saw, sitting on a rubble of débris and destruction, a young Spanish mother, mad as a March hare. In one hand she dangled a child, in the other she had a hard crust, gnawing it as a dog gnaws at a bone. To save our people here from this, we Communists will unite with anybody.

Let that picture burn itself into your mind ; let it fill you with hatred and desire for revenge against the class that has been responsible for such horrors. Let it determine you to go forward as never before, to defend the interests of the people, leading them on to the fight and struggle for the achievement of Socialism and the transformation of our land into a paradise of joy and happiness.

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The Peace Alliance Holds the Field

BY JOHN STRACHEY

A LEADING ARTICLE in the *Daily Herald* tells us that after the recent vote at the Co-operative Congress at Scarborough, the project for a Peace Alliance is " Dead, dead, dead."

The vigour with which the *Daily Herald* writes upon this issue is indeed remarkable. Its writers really put their heart into it. Their journalistic style improves out of all knowledge. While it is often by no means easy to get through a leading article in the *Daily Herald* criticising the National Government, its attacks upon either the United Front or the Peace Alliance are genuinely lively. It is clear that the writers care far more for the one job than for the other.

How are we to explain the passion with which not only the *Daily Herald* but every spokesman of the extreme right wing of the leadership of the Labour Movement exhibits in his opposition to the Peace Alliance ? At bottom the reason is this : any proposal, such as the Peace Alliance, for the unification of the progressive force in this country involves a serious and direct challenge to the National Government. Now the policy of the National Government is the expression of the will of the dominant section of the governing class of this country. The majority of the leaders of the Labour Movement have come, half consciously, half unconsciously, to the conclusion that it is too dangerous to challenge that will, on essential issues.

They have come to believe that if they did anything which would result in massing sufficient forces against the National Government to prove a serious menace to it, they would endanger the very existence of themselves and their organisations. They have come to believe that serious opposition to the National Government would cause the British ruling class to suppress the Labour Movement by turning to one form or other of fascism.

Indissolubly associated with their determination to refuse to do anything which would bring them into serious conflict with the National Government, is their determination to have nothing to do, not only with the Communist Party itself, but with any project supported by the Communist Party. For the majority of the leaders of the Labour Party believe, and they are not mistaken, that the Communist Party supports precisely those proposals and policies, such as the Peace Alliance, which would have the effect of seriously and successfully challenging the National Government ; that the Communist Party

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supports those proposals which are calculated to make it impossible for that government to carry through its present world policy.

To use the words of Lenin, our leaders have come to the point which is always reached in the decay of a social democratic party when they do not "dare to win." It is precisely because the Peace Alliance proposal looks so dangerously effective and hopeful that our leaders feel that it must be scotched at all costs.

It is by following the actions of the opponents of the Peace Alliance, not by reading their attacks upon it, that the impartial observer may convince himself that the above is the basis of their opposition. For they base their whole case against the proposal upon reasoning which sounds unrecognisably different from all this. In the main we are told that there are two reasons why the Labour Party must refuse to have anything to do with anybody else ; why it must refuse all co-operation with other parties or organisations which oppose the National Government. We are told, on the one hand, that it would be "an abandonment of the movement's socialist principles" to enter into co-operation with non-socialist opponents of the National Government and, on the other, that the Labour Party standing alone can and will succeed in defeating the National Government and obtaining an independent Labour majority.

Let us take these two arguments in turn. The short answer to the first one is that the dominant leaders of the movement, above all Sir Walter Citrine and Mr. Ernest Bevin, are finding it quite possible to co-operate, not, it is true with non-socialist opponents of the Chamberlain Government, but with the Chamberlain Government itself. We have it upon the reiterated authority of the by no means left wing leaders of the A.E.U. (Mr. Little and Mr. Smith) that their differences with the leaders of the General Council are precisely on this issue. The A.E.U. is determined that the trades union movement should not give its indispensable co-operation to the rearmament programme of any Government which is pursuing a pro-fascist instead of an anti-fascist world policy ; to any government, the world policy of which is leading to war and not to peace.

Sir Walter Citrine and Mr. Bevin are determined to attempt to lead the trade union movement into unconditional support of the National Government's rearmament programme. Once again I have not the slightest doubt that this is because Sir Walter Citrine, and those of his colleagues which he carries with him, believe that it is too dangerous for the Trades Union in particular and for the Labour Movement in general, to attempt to gainsay the determination of the National Government to pursue their pro-fascist world policy.

It is strange, terrible and sad that a leadership which is in reality pursuing, or at any rate endeavouring to pursue, a policy of co-operation with the National Government itself, can turn down a policy of co-operation with other opponents of the National Government

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in the name of sticking to socialistic principles. It is, above all, sad that so confused by the very real complexities of the present situation are many admirable and sincere Socialists, that this argument that it would be to " abandon Socialism " to take the only step which can defeat the National Government, carries considerable weight within the movement.

There remains the argument that the Labour Party, while refusing to collaborate with the other opponents of the National Government, will itself succeed in defeating that Government and will succeed in obtaining a clear and independent Labour majority. I believe that the one error which Mr. Sydney Elliott, the originator of the Peace Alliance proposals, has made in his otherwise admirable advocacy, is almost to imply that it is inherently impossible for the Labour Party to obtain an independent majority in Great Britain. I believe myself that this is far from being the case. I believe that a healthy and vigorous Labour Party, which would put itself at the head of all the progressive forces, could almost certainly obtain an independent Labour majority.

Paradoxical as it may seem, a study both of the psychology of the electorate, and, for that matter, a thorough calculation, seat by seat, of the electoral position both show that the Peace Alliance is in fact the way to secure an independent Labour majority. The Peace Alliance would involve the withdrawal of Labour candidates from perhaps 50 " Aylesburys " ; from 50 seats, that is to say, in which the Labour Party has not the faintest chance of victory ; from 50 seats in which the real choice lies simply between a Chamberlain supporter and an anti-Chamberlain Liberal. But in return for this the Liberal Party would have to stand down and clear the way for a Labour victory in an appreciable number of seats in which the presence of a Liberal candidate would be the one thing to prevent a Labour victory.

Far more important, however, is the psychological consideration. The fact that Labour was willing to support non-Labour progressives in seats of the Aylesbury type, would unquestionably bring enormous non-Labour support to Labour candidates in just those seats which can only be won by Labour if the Labour candidates become the effective representative of all the progressive forces in the area. Nor, unfortunately, do we lack for an example of such a seat. The Stafford by-election most painfully exemplified precisely this point. An able and active Labour candidate, Mr. Lloyd, failed to prevent a small increase in the Conservative majority. It is true that he received the support of some non-Labour forces such as the Council of Action and Reconstruction. But we can hardly expect non-Labour progressives to throw themselves behind Labour candidates in such seats as Stafford, when the Labour Party has just a few weeks before expended its very maximum effort to defeat these very forces in such seats as Aylesbury. Just as it is noticeable that the leader-writers of the *Daily Herald* only find inspiration when they are attacking the Peace Alliance or the

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United Front, so the Labour campaign at Aylesbury was conducted with quite unusual vigour and was directed essentially against the Liberal candidate because the latter stood for the Peace Alliance.

Thus the lesson of the by-elections is only too clear. Labour can win ; but Labour can only win by leading the whole of the anti-Chamberlain forces in a Peace Alliance.

It is difficult to write anything new as to the urgency of defeating the Chamberlain Government and reversing its world policy. One of the Co-operative members of Parliament who opposed the Peace Alliance went so far as to say that he saw no urgency in the present situation. No doubt he will continue to see no urgency until the bombs are actually falling around him.

But a new factor of urgency is appearing. Not only does the international situation drive ever more rapidly towards war. Interlocked with this drive there is a progressive deterioration in the economic situation ; a deterioration which is taking place in the teeth of the Government's heavy expenditure on rearmament. The slump is now rapidly developing. What it would be like but for rearmament we may judge from the fact that in spite of Governmental expenditure at the rate of more than three hundred million pounds a year, the downward curve is at least as steep as it was in the Spring of 1930.

There seems little doubt that if Great Britain is still at peace in the Autumn, unemployment will reach and pass the two million mark again. Once more substantial sections of the British working class are faced with the agonising prospect of the loss of their livelihood. Once more the cumulative frustrations and horrors of severe slump face the people of Britain. Once more whole sections of the working class will be forced to act under some leadership, in order to secure for themselves sufficient relief on which to exist, if not to live.

The question of whether the Labour Movement will have attained a sufficient degree of unity and of vigour in time to lead the working class in the new economic emergency is an all-important one. Do not let us make any mistake about it. If the British workers do not find in the Labour and Trades Union movement a force which is willing to lead them in the struggle to live, they will accept any other leadership, not excluding that of the fascists, which offers itself to them. Fortunately the left wing of the Labour Movement, which can and will lead the unemployed and employed struggles, as it led them, on the whole so successfully in the last slump, is far stronger now than it was then. Thus whatever the extreme right wing at the head of the official machine may do, we are assured of a vigorous lead being given to the unemployed from within the Labour Movement. But that lead will be a dozen times more effective if it is given by a united movement ; if the official machine of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress, with its nation-wide ramifications can be utilised to lead the struggle of the unemployed.

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Though many of its advocates may not realise it, this question is in fact the same question as that of the Peace Alliance. Only a united Labour Movement, which has put itself at the head of all the progressive forces of the country, and by so doing has entered the path of resistance to the will of the National Government can lead in the coming struggles of the new slump. It is because of the ever-growing menace of the international situation and the newly-emerging menace of the economic situation that all talk of the Peace Alliance proposal being dead, must in the very nature of things, be nonsense. Indeed, the fact that two million odd votes were given at the Co-operative Congress to the Peace Alliance as against four million odd votes against in spite of the literally frenzied opposition of the leadership of the movement, marks an insufficient but yet substantial advance.

The leaders of the Labour Party are themselves slowly making it clear to people that support of the Peace Alliance means support of serious effective opposition to the Chamberlain Government ; that opposition to the Peace Alliance, no matter how left wing its expression, means co-operation with the Chamberlain Government. As this becomes more and more apparent support for the Peace Alliance, or some similar proposal cannot fail to grow. It is indeed just because the extreme Right Wing of the leaders of the movement realise this quite clearly that they are attempting at the moment to stifle all discussion of the proposal within the movement.

This attempt to prevent local Labour Parties, trade union branches, Co-operative Guilds and the like from discussing one of the great current political issues of the day is something new and something deplorable in the history of the British Labour movement. If this attempt to gag the free discussion of any issue which the units of the movement like to choose to discuss were to succeed, it would mean the end of all possibilities of life and vitality for our movement. We must appeal most strongly, even to those who sincerely oppose the Peace Alliance itself, to join with us in demanding and enforcing the right to discuss this or any other issue. The whole democratic tradition of the British Labour movement, to which all our leaders are constantly referring, consists in little else but this right of the units of the movement freely to make up their minds by discussions as to where they stand on the great issues of the day. Then, out of these numerous local discussions and decisions, Annual Conference evolves a policy for the movement as a whole. If the basic units of the movement lost their rights of discussion the whole character of the British Labour Movement, as a federally organised democratic body, would be lost.

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Engineers versus the Government

BY CLAUDE BERRIDGE

THE MEETING OF the National Committee of the Amalgamated Engineering Union held at Morecambe, opened in a situation both critical and favourable to the engineers and the whole working class.

That there was a general air of expectant uncertainty penetrating the conference room would be no exaggeration. In fact, it seriously influenced the trend of events, resulting in a marked reluctance on the part of the delegates to express any idea which might be construed as a criticism of the Executive Council's previous line, particularly on the arms programme and Spain.

Never before has a trade union national meeting taken place where such warmth of loyalty and adherence to the official leadership has been expressed by the rank and file. The general concensus of opinion could well be summed up in a phrase ; there are weaknesses, there are limitations, but they are putting up a fight.

The Presidential address which set the tone of the Conference suffered from the fact that while treating with the international political situation, it postponed a detailed analysis of the forces at work in Spain. Greatest emphasis was placed upon the economic position of the industry and increased unemployment among engineering workers.

Thus the stage was set, but the multifarious economic issues did not appear as precisely those issues around which the working class should organise their attack to bring down the National Government. This became abundantly clear in the discussion immediately following the Presidential address on the Arms programme.

Resolutions appeared from seven Divisional and joint Divisional Committees designed to instruct the Executive Council to demand 3d. per hour increase, a number of them laying down a time limit that negotiations should end by August and certain of them calling for a strike ballot if the demands were not conceded. Behind this demand pressed forward by the engineering workers through the complicated trade union machinery onto the agenda of the National Committee, can be seen a desire to act now, and anxiety at the prospect of future negotiations being as prolonged as those in the past, which might very well result in the workers " missing the boat."

The specific character of the demand (3d. per hour) and the time limit clause were only finally defeated when the Executive Council representatives, the General Secretary and the President had used

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their eloquence and power to influence the delegates. Don't tie our hands, a time limit is a pistol at the head of the Federation and they wont negotiate under such circumstances, was their plea. But it is significant to note that with all their efforts the final decisions on wages called not only for a substantial increase in wages and the expediting of negotiations, but " that any offer made by the employers be submitted to a ballot vote of the members."

Similar evidence of the absence of a blind and unquestioning faith can be seen in the decisions of the Conference on the question of the 40-hour week. Ten resolutions appeared on this question, many demanding a time limit of not longer than six months and failing satisfaction a re-calling of the National Committee " to consider the whole position and decide on policy."

The fundamental weakness of the Conference was never made more apparent than in the character of the objections raised to the Resolution by the officials present. The General Secretary prophesied a blank refusal from the Federation and certainly provided no answer to this problem. Mr. Openshaw appealed to the Conference to be logical, " they had already decided not to countenance the dilution of labour. They had asked for a further limitation of overtime, and now they were proposing to add to the restrictions on the industry by the introduction of the 40-hour week." As the delegate from Birkenhead said : " What do you mean by restrictions ? Are you arguing for the employers or the members ? "

An amendment to delete the time limit, which meant " to leave it to the Executive," was defeated 20 votes to 19. The 40-hour week without reductions in pay has to be pressed through negotiations for a definite answer, within a period of six months.

The refusal of the National Committee to contribute to " limiting the capacity in which females should be employed " was prompted by their recognition that women were already in the industry, and that limitation was no more constructive as a policy than any reactionary or Fascist idea, that a woman's place is the home or that she ought not to be allowed in the industry. This was further evidenced in the refusal of the National Committee to defeat a resolution " impressing upon the whole membership and particularly the Shop Stewards the desirability of assisting efforts to organise them."

Amendments to the Holiday With Pay Agreement to provide for payment for all statutory holidays, were supported strongly by the Conference ; along with demands for reduction in the hours of overtime allowed per month, to be worked according to agreements with the Employers' Federation. On the other hand, the growing opposition to excessive overtime working and a desire for a greater control by the trade unions and particularly the Shop Stewards of working conditions is evidenced in a new clause suggested in regard to overtime working. Whereas formerly, employers only had to plead " delivery

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dates " and invariably District Committees gave permission for excessive hours of overtime to be worked, i.e., anything over 30 hours a month. The Executive Council are instructed to affect the insertion of a new clause, requiring " proof that such delivery dates were accepted within reasonable possibility of being met without any workman exceeding 15 hours' overtime in any four weeks, shall be provided by the employers concerned to the shop stewards and the Union's District Committee."

A National Charter for apprenticed boys and youths has been formulated, setting forth a wage scale beginning at 18s. and advancing annually to 35s. per week ; three hundred-and-twenty hours technical education in the employers' time and at his expense every year ; apprenticeship to end not later than 21 years of age and a full journeyman's rate to be paid at the end of apprenticeship period. As further proof that youth is at last coming into its own and that there is accorded full recognition of its tremendous importance to the organised labour movement, it was further decided to seek an amendment to the existing Youth Agreement, to establish the right of adult shop stewards to negotiate youth questions under the agreements established arising from the strikes of last year.

The statement of the President, Mr. Little, on the Spanish position, was made the more impressive by the meticulous care with which he detailed his own experiences in that brave country. There was no discordant note here; not one but would have given his heart that the Union should face its responsibility. A decision was recorded " to give their utmost support to all organised efforts that are endeavouring to force the present Government into recognising the international rights of the Spanish Government . . . . we demand that arms be supplied . . . . call upon our membership to participate in full in activities such as the Voluntary Industrial Aid. We pay our deepest respects to the British workers and trade unionists fighting in the International Brigade and are proud that members of our Union are among them." This in no way satisfied the delegates and a further Resolution was carried unanimously : " We request the Executive Council to form a voluntary fund to provide lorries for Spain, asking the members to contribute 1s. per month for this purpose, the sum aimed at being £50,000.

Two further questions of vital importance remained ; the unification of the engineering trade union movement and the imperative demand for working-class unity. Here emerges with greatest clarity the fundamental weakness of the Presidential address and its effect upon the Conference. For while in regard to what in effect would be the re-entry of the Amalgamated Engineering Union into the joint movement, the Executive Council members were bitterly opposed, but the President came out individually in support.

Re-entry of the Amalgamated Engineering Union even on the

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basis commensurate with its membership and influence was construed by the Executive Committee members to be a step which would result in a weakening of the Amalgamated Engineering Union position, the unexpressed idea being to let the craftsmen stand alone and the semi-skilled look after themselves. The President, however, won the Conference with his statement: "that I fear them more outside than inside a joint movement." As a result the Council were instructed to seek a Conference of all engineering trade unions and a reconstitution of a joint movement with equitable representation.

A different story has to be told of the fight for the political unity of the working class. A resolution directed to the Labour Party Executive calling upon them to meet the Central Committee of the Communist Party to discuss those outstanding questions which in their opinion constituted a barrier in the way of unity, was discussed in an acrimonious way. Mr. Openshaw dragged that skeleton from the cupboard which has so often been paraded, "if one body more than another is responsible for the growth of Fascism it is the Communist Party through the publicity they have given to this insignificant body." The realities of the situation were only introduced when a delegate from Glasgow intervened with a powerful contribution and pointed proudly to the achievements of the Popular Front in France, where there now exists a trade union movement 5 million strong, and among many other things a 40-hour week. The Resolution was declared not carried after equal voting.

While it can be said that no startling decisions were recorded, certainly the foundations are laid for a big advance among engineering workers. Taking the decisions regarding the youth and the demand for the 40-hour week coupled with the determination of the Conference to get to grips with the problem of the semi-skilled workers in industry, we should now set forth to make these demands widely known in factory and trade union branch. With the masses mobilised and with a strengthened Shop Stewards movement the counter offensive of the working class against the employers and the National Government can speedily be come an accomplished fact, and the serried ranks of the engineering workers will be brought to bear against the forces of reaction, bringing new reserves into the struggle for democracy and peace, alongside our comrades in Spain and other hard pressed sectors of the world anti-fascist front.

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Co-operators in Congress

BY J. J. McSHANE*

TO UNDERSTAND THE decisions of the Co-operative Congress it is necessary to understand the composition of Congress and the mental make-up of its delegates. It is a platitude that, in its composition, Congress is a somewhat loose, ramshackle affair. This is not to condemn it; but it is composed of organisations any one of whose immediate interests are not necessarily parallel to those of the others. Indeed, as they may at times clash (and did clash in this Congress), it will be clear that looseness rather than rigidity is, to-day at any rate, an essential for rough agreement.

Congress is unique in some respects in this country : it is unique in that in no other Congress or Conference is there such a catholic interpretation of the fundamentals of their Movement—in their interpretation of the significance of their aim, " the Co-operative Commonwealth ". At Labour Party, or at Conservative, Conferences, the delegates may, and invariably do, differ widely and sometimes passionately, upon the means of achieving their objects, but as to their ultimate goal, there is little difference of opinion. In Congress, however, between those Socialist-minded delegates who realise that the winning of " the Co-operative Commonwealth " goal implies the abolition of private ownership in the means of production and distribution, and hundreds of others who regard this phrase as, in effect, merely opening out a few more branches or services—between these two groups there is a gulf wide as the ocean. The latter group (and amongst these are many of the national leaders) would regard the abolition of private ownership as vulgarly revolutionary !

Generally speaking, the outlook of the retail societies varies in accordance with their geography : the societies covering the industrial areas are most advanced in thought, and this frequently through no virtue of their own, but through the pressure of the keener spirits who attend the Members' meetings. The politically " backward areas ", are covered by societies whose delegates faithfully represent such views in Congress; but there are still exceptional areas, advanced industrially, where the delegates may be as reactionary as their rural colleagues. The Productive (Co-partnership) Societies form another group not

*Mr. J. J. McShane, a well-known Midlands co-operator, member of the committee of the Walsall Co-operative Society, here gives his impressions of the recent Co-operative Congress at Scarborough, where he moved the resolution in favour of the United Peace Alliance.

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so easily classified. But many of these still retain much of the traditional background of the small craftsman, although in recent years this outlook has been greatly modified by the advance of monopoly capitalism and mass-production methods.

These well-defined types may be noted in the support (or lack of support) given to the Co-operative Party, and also to the Press Scheme for the development of *Reynolds News*. So far, only about 61 per cent. of the total membership of the Movement is affiliated to the Co-operative Party. (Indeed many societies look with considerable disfavour upon the " introduction of politics into the Co-operative Movement "). And hundreds of societies have up till now refused to join in *Reynolds* Press Scheme. Further, while the decisions of Congress are generally respected, and may be regarded as an indication of the trend of thought annually, these decisions, in view of the " voluntary " nature of Co-operation, cannot as a rule be enforced. Hence, compromise or postponement is characteristic of, indeed a necessity for, Congress. But, in the rapidly-changing world in which Co-operation has to function, this inability to compel acceptance of vital decisions, in view of the competition of monopoly capitalism, has come to be regarded as a menace to the future well-being of the Movement as a whole; and more and more, from the General Secretary of the Co-operative Union downwards, comes the demand for "order" and for "discipline."

* * *

The most obvious criticism of the functioning of Congress would be the relative waste of valuable time, largely on ceremonial, upon the Monday morning when it opens. When it is realised that Congress " rises " at noon on Wednesday, and loses almost the half of Monday in formalities and ceremony, it will be seen that, if this part of the agenda were transferred to the Saturday afternoon (to enable delegates to get there in time), important business would not receive the cursory treatment which it at present does. So far, Congress has rejected this sensible proposal, but the ever-increasing importance of the issues thrust upon the Movement will sooner or later compel reconsideration of this matter.

The Presidential Address of the President (Mr. J. J. Worley), was, in many respects, a remarkably fine analysis of some of the main problems confronting the Co-operative Movement, nationally and internationally. He exposed the dangers of the peoples from fascist economy and fascist methods—fascist philosophy and practice; he warned his hearers that " the narcotic of false security lurks in the prevailing notion that ' it can never happen here ' "; he described graphically " democracy in retreat ", and showed the subtle methods by which in this country the State is already introducing fascist methods. But he later stultified much of his case by appealing to that same State for special consideration for Co-operation. The same lack of realism and of consistency is to be found in the Report of the Central

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Board (p. 7). They complain of the attacks of the Government upon the Movement, they refer to dictatorships " blotting out freedom, equity, justice, toleration and democracy ", and then " call upon the Government [this Government !] to defend the victims of fascist aggression and to re-establish the forces of international law and international co-operation as the basis of an economic democracy ". What can one say of this but that the Central Board can have no sense of the realities behind Fascism ? Do they seriously mean what they say when they " call upon this Government to defend the victims of fascist aggression " ? Hasn't Chamberlain told them what he will defend ? He will defend the frontiers of France and of Portugal, he will defend Egypt and Iraq (oil-wells !) and the British Empire, but not foolish things like democracy or liberty or freedom !

Here is the inherent weakness of Congress and of Co-operative leaders : they can state a case clearly and objectively, but as to positive remedy and action, they " call upon the Government " against which they spend thousands of pounds annually to defend themselves. Similarly Mr. A. V. Alexander, M.P., at the Sunday night's propaganda meeting : " If, if, if (he said three times), if by the grace of God war can be averted,"—" If we could only get three million more Co-operators to vote with us," Always, " if, if." What can this attitude lead to but to a sense of frustration and thence to fascism itself ?

One or two more of the contradictions within Congress may here be noted. It is fairly generally known that the Women's Guild Movement is pledged to absolute pacifism. The Central Board has never repudiated this view-point. At Congress, a Parkstone and Bournemouth delegate asked why the Board had now repudiated the pledge of the Woodcraft Folk " not to fight for King and Country " ? There was no reply to this question. Again, the National Authority recommended all sections of the Movement to boycott Japanese goods. The C.W.S., which is a member of the National Authority, has taken no action on this matter. Sir George Riddle defended the C.W.S. on the ground that if they had to start a boycott, they would have to boycott five or six countries at the present time.

* * *

A striking instance of the internal difficulties within the Movement was provided by the debate upon Co-ordination of Production. This problem bristles with snags, and goes deep down to the core of Co-partnership Production. The complexity of the problem at present in relation to production may be gauged from the following figures : The C.W.S. has nine boot factories, the Scottish C.W.S. has one, and the Co-partnerships have fifteen. All this frequently means confusion and internal competition and waste. Everybody recognises this. The same position is reflected in other industries, e.g., clothing.

The proposal of the C.W.S. is, briefly, that in these days of mass-production and rationalisation, some considerable measure of

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re-organisation and co-ordination in relation to these factories and those of the future, should be adopted. Now, the Co-partnerships are run under workers' control, and the surpluses are shared amongst them. The C.W.S., however, stand, in relation to their workers, as employers to employees. The Productive Federation are strongly opposed to this proposal, and, as has been indicated above, are in a strong position since (whatever Congress may do) they cannot be compelled to accept any decision which is not satisfactory to them. The Committee of Enquiry has been given a further period to solve this, up to the present, baffling problem.

The Peace Alliance debate was the high light of Congress. No discussion has aroused the delegates for years as this did. If, as the *Daily Herald* has said, at least four times, this issue is " dead ", the proverbial cat must be getting envious. For here, at last, was reality. Here was a proposal which specified not only action but fruitful action. At least, it did propose something positive, instead of the paralysing inertia that at present dulls the morale and spirit of the keenest men and women in the working-class movement. When it was decided " that the question be now put ", there were still two queues of speakers waiting to be heard.

But criticism is necessary here for the promoters of the resolution. Those in authority, after the Co-operative Party Conference, should have taken immediate steps to organise their supporters up and down the country. Instead, one or two perfunctory meetings were held, and the Emergency Resolution ultimately sent to Congress was received by some in a roundabout way as if those who espoused the idea were afraid of offending colleagues. It will scarcely be believed that I learnt by pure accident, that there was likely to be an informal meeting of those in favour on the Sunday night. A few did turn up but nothing could be done in the absence of so many others. In fact, nothing *was* done until Standing Orders Committee called us together. Under these circumstances, to obtain 2,382,000 votes as against 4,492,000, was actually a signal triumph—but not for the organisers ! What might have been done if support had been intelligently and enthusiastically organised !

The debate provoked passion, sincerity, and irrelevant personalities. But it was evident from the beginning that (although I warned Congress of the " bogies " that would be trotted out) not reason but prejudice was to be the chief weapon of those who opposed. The chief opponent was Mr. A. V. Alexander, M.P., the measure of whose opposition can be gauged from the following (I hope) fair summary of his speech :

(1) that Moscow and the Communists were responsible for the Resolution !

(2) that the Liberals would not join a Peace Alliance for Sir Archibald Sinclair had told him so. (This was the very next day repudiated by Sinclair).

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(3) that to say that the Labour Party could not win a majority at the next General Election was pure defeatism. (He did not attempt to show how the thing could be done).

(4) that the passing of the Resolution would split the Co-operative Movement.

Sir William Bradshaw was instructed by the C.W.S. to ask me as the proposer of the Resolution whether it meant working with the Liberals and with the Communists. The *Daily Herald* characteristically declared that this question remained unanswered throughout. This was not true. I had already answered it in advance in explaining the resolution, because I knew the question was to be asked. But it would appear, from Mr. Alexander's speech that there wasn't very much doubt in his mind and that Sr. William's question was in a double sense superfluous !

The real question that remained unanswered was mine—and the only one that remains unanswered to this day—when I declared that the Labour Party on its present basis could not win a majority at the next General Election, and challenged any who disagreed to come to the rostrum and show us, " beyond any reasonable doubt " how the thing could be done. Not a single opposition speaker attempted this. I was not surprised.

Well, we were defeated as much by lack of organisation as by prejudice. But the effect of our work at Congress will be felt for a long time, and may well yet, before it is too late, provoke some concerted action by the Labour Movement. For, those nearly 2½ millions of votes, vastly increased as they will be during the next twelve months, cannot be ignored.

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Czechoslovakia and World Peace

BY RICHARD GOODMAN

AT THE MOMENT of writing a disturbing and dangerous tendency has become manifest in the British capitalist press. It is also reflected to some extent in certain progressive and Labour circles who, although undoubtedly sincere and perfectly well-intentioned, should know better.

This attitude is summed up in the words of the Diplomatic Correspondent of the *Sunday Times* when he writes :—

> While anxiety concerning the international situation still persists in London, it is true to say that apprehension concerning the immediate future has of late diminished.

There can be no doubt that this is what Mr. Chamberlain and his friends would have us believe. But facts speak differently. And the fact is that, behind all this whistling in the dark, behind the deliberately assumed optimism, the tension in Europe is once again increasing and may break at any moment to involve the world in a major conflagration. The only cause such false optimism can serve is the cause of those who, for their own class interests, wish to disarm the democratic movement of resistance to fascism and the fascist aggressors and to diminish the vigilance of the friends of peace.

No one, of course, will deny that this growing tension is of a new kind, that it is different from that which preceded the dramatic week-end of May 20 when world anti-fascism made it impossible for Hitler's twelve Reichswehr divisions to march into Czechoslovakia. It is, indeed, just because of that victory that the situation now developing is different, that the tension characterising the present period is deeper and less obvious than previously. And it is just because this is so that the need for vigilance, that the fight against all tendencies towards disarming the democratic movement is to-day more than ever urgent.

Let us, therefore, examine the position as it is at the moment.

It is now generally admitted—except in the British capitalist press—that the three factors mainly responsible for defeating the very obvious designs of the Third Reich on May 20 were :

(1) The very prompt and extraordinarily efficient defence measures taken by the Czechoslovakian President, Dr. Benes, and the Czechoslovak General Staff ;

(2) The unambiguous declaration issued from the Quai d'Orsay that France was ready to fulfil her obligations to Czechoslovakia ; and

(3) The equally unambiguous information that reached Warsaw—and hence Berlin—that the Soviet Union would not tolerate a German,

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or German-Polish attack on Czechoslovakia—information which completely disorganised the joint German-Polish plans for a co-ordinated action. (There is reason to believe that a *joint German-Polish* attack was contemplated. Polish divisions had certainly been moved up to the Czech frontier and, according to sources usually to be relied upon, those Polish divisions were to attack the Teschen district simultaneously with the German attack on Bohemia.)

What was the position of the Chamberlain Government? The amazing divergence between the reports in the British and French press and the actual facts was perhaps one of the most revealing aspects of the whole situation.

Immediately it was obvious that the Nazi plan had been frustrated, an overhwelming flood of propaganda was released to the effect that this had been mainly due to "vigorous British demarches" in Berlin, to the "perfect functioning of the Anglo-French Entente."

Nothing could have been more removed from the truth—as certain sections of the French press obviously realised after a while.

According to the best sources, the British Ambassador began by expressing the "apprehension" of his Government at the extensive German troop movements up to the Czech border. He was told by von Ribbentrop that these were nothing extraordinary, that they were "seasonal, routine" movements, and he went away apparently satisfied when, to the entire world, it was patently obvious that the Reich Foreign Minister had told just another of his gilt-edged lies. Next morning he was back again with more expressions of "apprehension," only to be told this time that the troop movements were "purely defensive" in view of the "provocative" activities of the Czechs. Finally, he paid his third visit to the Wilhelmstrasse and informed Ribbentrop of the British position—that Mr. Chamberlain was anxious for a "peaceful settlement," that every influence would be used to bring about such a settlement, that if such a settlement were reached, Britain would be ready to open up negotiations for a "general settlement," and finally that, with the French taking up the attitude they had done, there was a possibility of Britain being involved if it did come to war.

The fact of the matter was that the Chamberlain Government found itself in a very difficult position. It would not give a straightforward warning to Germany as the French had done because to do so would have destroyed the main basis for the longed-for Four-Power Western European Pact. But it could not, on the other hand, do nothing at all for that would have meant showing its hand too openly leading to serious complications at home. It had, therefore, to do just sufficient to save its face and not enough to upset Hitler, who had been stopped by other factors anyway. Hence the extraordinary press campaign that followed, given added substance by the tone of the German press which was mainly concerned with pressing to

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advantage this weakness in the front of the democratic Powers. It was significant that when the true facts of the British position began to circulate, the German press changed its tune very abruptly and began paying " tributes " to Mr. Chamberlain. There is indeed reason to believe that another not unimportant motive behind the inspired press accounts of the " British stand " was the desire to see Hitler get off as lightly as possible from the very obvious defeat he had suffered.

Thus Britain was in fact the sole weak sector in the democratic front, and it was soon realised that, unless its attitude strengthened, the crisis that had been averted would certainly develop again. Actually, however, instead of hardening its attitude, Britain began at once actively to pursue a policy of assistance to Germany. That policy was and is one of attempting to isolate Czechoslovakia, while at the same time pressing the right wing Czech Agrarians inside the country to "open the front " to the Nazis, by capitulating to the Henleinist demands.

Let us now consider the position inside Czechoslovakia itself.

Immediately after its defeat of May 20 the Third Reich and its Henleinist agents in Czechoslovakia demanded the withdrawal of the defence troops that had been sent into the frontier areas.

It was obvious why this should have been their foremost demand. For

> in the first place, their presence and, indeed, the general active preparedness of the Czechs ruled out the possibility of the Nazis delivering a surprise attack similar to that which took Austria ;
>
> in the second place, it ruled out the possibility of an *effective*, surprise action by the Henleinists from within ; and
>
> finally, by curtailing to some extent the Henlein terror in the Sudeten areas, it was bound to strengthen the democratic opposition in these areas and so prevent Henlein ensuring for himself the 100 per cent. vote which he had declared he would obtain.

The Czech Government very rightly refused to consider this demand and immediately British diplomacy swung into action. Accepting the German proposal that " neutral observers " should be sent into the Sudeten areas and that these would then render the presence of the defence troops " unnecessary," the British suggested to Prague that it might, after all, be better—in the interests of a " peaceful settlement " if the troops were withdrawn. Once again the proposal was rejected. Then, in spite of the objections of the British Minister—and, apparently, over his head—three more demands, categorical this time, were made for the withdrawal of the troops and the two British Military Attachés were sent off on a tour of Sudetenland, to act as " neutral observers."

Not content with this, the British conducted a simultaneous attack on the Nationalities Statutes in order to obtain more far reaching concessions for the Henleinists than the Czech Government was prepared to give on its own. This attack was conducted through the right wing Agrarians in the Government, and in particular the Minister

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of the Interior, Czermy. Before the British started to intervene, the Statutes were, to all intents and purposes, complete in draft. The publication of this draft at that moment and its discussion in Parliament would have rallied round the Government a considerable number of non-Henlein Germans and had a very important effect on the elections still to take place.

Under pressure from the British, however, the Agrarians suddenly began to demand a revision of the draft and, so, effectively held up its publication. This was nothing more nor less than a provocation playing right into Henlein's hands. But that was not all. Under joint German and British pressure negotiations were opened with the Henlein representatives, and these negotiations were kept absolutely secret.

Finally—and very approximately at the same time as British pressure was brought to bear in Paris to obtain the isolation and effective gagging of the French Communists—there came the British-inspired threat to ban the Communist daily paper *Rude Pravo.*

Meanwhile, what of external developments ?

Interest here centres on the military conversations between Poland and Rumania, on the internal position in Austria, and the developments in Hungary.

The importance of the Polish-Rumanian talks has to a very great extent been overlooked in this country, but their significance can be judged at once by the fact that they were very favourably received in Berlin.

The Polish paper, *Kurier Warsawski*, has indeed openly stated that Berlin had noted with satisfaction that the object of the talks was to prevent assistance being rendered to Czechoslovakia in the event of an attack by Germany.

It would, however, be premature to imagine that Rumania has finally been drawn into the block of the aggressors via these conversations with Poland, or, indeed, that the policy of Colonel Beck has finally triumphed in Poland itself. In the event of an actual outbreak of war, sudden changes very often occur. Nevertheless, the fact at the present moment is that the Polish-Rumanian conversations have certainly not strengthened the democratic peace front and that these conversations have received the blessing, not only of Berlin, but also of London.

What is the real aim of the Beck diplomacy ? It is to create a new " axis " that will function in harmony with that of Berlin-Rome, a new " cordon sanitaire," if you like, whose fundamental purpose is to attempt to isolate the U.S.S.R. from the rest of Europe.

Hoping to attach to this " axis " the small States between the Baltic and Black Seas—Finland, Esthonia, Lithuania, Latvia and Rumania—Beck has emphasised that it will, of course, be essentially " neutral."

Such a " neutral " bloc would, it is obvious, be of the greatest advantage to the aggressive designs of German fascism.

In the first place it would detach the Baltic countries and Rumania

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from the League of Nations and the collective security system, and so render them open to attack by the Third Reich or the Beck clique in Poland.

In the second place it would finally split up the Little Entente.

But there is another and more immediate significance. At the moment British influence in Rumania is strong, stronger perhaps than it has been for a considerable time, and certainly strong enough to prevent Rumania entering into negotiations with another power without, at least, the tacit agreement of London.

The fact is, indeed, that the Beck scheme in general and the Polish-Rumanian military talks in particular have the approval of the Chamberlain Government. That this is so is obvious if the matter is examined from another angle.

In its drive to weaken the collective organisation of peace, the British National Government has made considerable use of the conception of " neutrality " which is a necessary complement to the conception of " appeasement," to the conception of coming to an agreement with the aggressors.

The hand of the British Government has been obvious in the " neutralisation " of both Belgium and quite recently of Switzerland, while the proposal that Czechoslovakia should be neutralised has also been actively pushed by London.

Now, the conception of " neutrality " has been " justified " on the ground that the League of Nations and collective security have repeatedly failed. But the fact is that on every occasion upon which the League has failed, Britain, the most prominent advocate of the policy of " neutrality" for small countries, has been responsible. Nor is this accidental, for is it not the fundamental policy of the British ruling class to buy off the aggressors by means of concessions at the expense of just these small Powers ?

Beck's proposal for a new " axis " is, therefore, completely in keeping with present British diplomacy and is, indeed, if not directly, then certainly indirectly inspired and approved of by the Chamberlain Government.

The significance of this development in the present situation is obvious.

Hitler, as we have already said, is now manœuvring for positions from which to push ahead once again with his aggressive designs, but neither he nor his friends in London are anxious for a war which could only result in a crushing defeat of fascism. Therefore he and his accomplices are aiming to isolate Czechoslovakia externally, while seeking to strengthen the Henleinist position within the Republic, in order ultimately to overrun it.

Before turning to discuss the developments in Austria and their relevance to the Nazi menace to Czechoslovakia, let us look, for a moment, at the position of Hungary.

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There can be no doubt that the forcible occupation of Austria has led leading Hungarian revisionist circles to believe that the position so created is very favourable for a realisation of their demands.

Writing in the paper, *Pesti Napoli*, the former Prime Minister of Hungary, Count Bethlen, declares :—

> At last the dictatorship of the Little Entente has been abolished and Hungary may realise its revisionist aspirations.

This makes it quite clear that, in his opinion, it is not Germany, but Czechoslovakia that is Hungary's main enemy, and, although the occupation of Austria has made it inevitable for Hungary to " adapt its foreign policy to that of its neighbour state," the adaption of that policy, according to Bethlen, is the sole guarantee of the safety of Hungary.

There can be no misreading of this declaration.

Simultaneously with this resurgence of Hungarian revisionism Nazi pressure inside the country is increasing. It is a well known fact that the abortive putsch last year was organised under the immediate leadership of the German Ambassador there, Mackensen. It is equally well known that Germany has provided the Hungarian fascist organisation move, through Mackensen, with 5,000 rifles and a large number of hand grenades, as well as subsidising other fascist groups.

Now, however, the position is becoming extremely critical. The population is openly terrorised by the fascist gangs of Count Festetich, Rainish and Major Szalasy. The programme of these groups—financed as they are from Berlin—is brazenly admitted to be the seizure of power, the complete subordination of the home and foreign policy of the country to the interests of the Third Reich, the tearing up of the Treaty of Trianon and the recreation of the pre-war Hungary. Nor has the recent Cabinet change—ostensibly directed against the Nazis—actually improved matters. On the contrary the programme of the new Premier Imredy indicates very clearly that, while accelerating the fascisation of the country, it is also preparing for the day when, it hopes, its revisionist ideals will be realised by force of arms.

Finally, therefore, one comes to the developments in Austria since the invasion.

Now it is obvious that Government circles here are using these developments in an attempt to create the impression that as Hitler is " preoccupied " with Austria, it is unlikely that he will make another move just at the moment.

No doubt there is a certain element of truth in this, but the important question is what is actually behind that " preoccupation."

Many observers had thought that the German Government would try to stage some kind of a demagogic show in Austria after the invasion—even at the expense of a great deal of money—in order to " win over " certain sections of the population.

Nothing of the kind, however, has been done. Instead, Berlin has

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concentrated exclusively on the ruthless " colonisation " of the country as a war base against Czechoslovakia.

The exchange value of the old Austrian currency to the new German mark was fixed at a rate which involved approximately a 15 per cent. loss to the Austrians.

At the same time, while the Austrians were forbidden to raise prices, and an order against increased wages was issued, Nazi goods were sold to Austria at the prevailing high rates.

There followed, of course, heavy German purchases of Austrian goods—foodstuffs especially—at the cheap rates and the country was, in fact, looted.

Consequently food costs rose, quality deteriorated and supplies of previously available goods ran short. Simultaneously Austro-Nazis found themselves being eased out of the positions they had only recently eased themselves into—eased out " by the Prussians."

As a result a serious state of affairs has arisen, a state of affairs which suggests that in Vienna at least

> a second June 30 seems to be in the air (Prague *Rote Fahne*).

There is good reason to believe, however, that something bigger than a June 30 is in prospect.

The position is as follows :—

> The existing strategic communications between Vienna and Bavarian cities were constructed exclusively to serve the movement of men and material on lines reaching from Vienna to the Italian frontier on the south-west and the Russian frontier on the north-east, with the minimum of communication between Vienna and the German and Swiss borders.

This situation was in part responsible for the break downs which occurred during the German invasion of Austria in March. Then the roads were overloaded with mechanised military traffic and the breakdown of tanks caused a block which forced simultaneously advancing cavalry and infantry to make enormously long detours, while tanks and lorries stood blocked for miles on the main lines—an ideal target for attacking aircraft, if there had been attacking aircraft then.

Consequently plans have been completed for the construction of at least four additional east-west military road and rail lines between Vienna and Bavaria.

Now in the event of a German attack on Czechoslovakia, it is thought probable that the Czechs will not rely solely on defensive action on all fronts but, while holding the North Bohemia and Moravian defences, and falling back somewhat in north-west Bohemia, will launch an offensive from the Bratislava area.

Mechanised units from Bratislava could reach the industrial suburbs of Vienna in an hour or so, and there can be little doubt of the reception they would receive from the overwhelming majority of the population of those districts.

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There is now a saying circulating in Central Europe that : " Vienna was the last town Hitler took and it will be the first he will lose."

With a completion of the German railway plan in Austria, the situation would however be quite different and Vienna, adequately linked with Munich and other Bavarian centres, would become a serious advance base for a German attack.

Hence, complementary with the building of the strategic lines, the military and Gestapo terror.

> This military aspect of the situation also throws light on the Hungarian position. European military experts are of the opinion that the principal long-range aim of the German General Staff is to control the " strategic triangle," Vienna-Budapest-Prerov (Prerau).
>
> Prerov, in the heart of Czechoslovakia, is the biggest railway junction in Central Europe and was the nerve centre of transport in the old Austro-Hungarian Empire.
>
> Neither Vienna alone, nor Vienna plus Budapest would, it is estimated, be sufficient to make Mittel-Europa a base adequate for the decisive " war against the West."
>
> Control of Prerov is necessary for the consolidation of Mittel-Europa and control of Prerov means, of course, control of the whole of Bohemia and Moravia.

It will be seen, therefore, that, contrary to the falsely assumed optimism which Mr. Chamberlain and his friends are now trying to hawk around, a new deterioration of the crucial situation in Central Europe is taking place. And it is obvious enough from all we have said that for this deterioration the Chamberlain Government is mainly responsible.

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Mexico on the March

BY IVOR MONTAGU

" U.S.S.R. IS NOT MEXICO "—when Litvinov spoke these famous words to a British Ambassador who was trying on out-of-place blustering, hectoring methods he had found useful elsewhere, he alluded to the contrast between a country which had rejected imperialism for ever and a country typically weakened and bled white by imperialism for generations. As though spurred by these words, as though invigorated by the example on the other side of the world, the Mexican people has embarked upon a struggle of its own for social amelioration, which, in its condition of subjection to foreign economic exploitation, has straightway become a conflict for national independence.

The fight is on. Immediately the lie factories of the opponents of Mexican independence pour out a torrent of propaganda to drown the issue.

What is the man-in-the-street's idea of a Mexican ? A thief, a bandit, idle, feckless, an assassin, a cowboy in sombrero with pistols in his boots and a dagger between the teeth. Revolution every fortnight by leaders who sell out as soon as they win, and, favourite sport between revolutions, shooting lonely English bank managers on ranches. This is the picture which has been dinned into the English and American publics by countless shockers, in print and celluloid, and in the only form in which Mexican items are allowed to be printed in the press. It is the old tactics of the Reichstag fire. Burn the Reichstag and prove the Communists are an element of disorder which must be suppressed. Keep Negroes in ignorance, poverty and disease and prove they are inferior because they lack education and die early in epidemics. Organise gangster murders and church attacks in Spain and prove the government incapable of preserving peace.

All the romantic (*sic*) " colour " of Mexico in the films and dispatches may be highly " authentic " but it lacks that little mention of the rôle of foreign capital (the same foreign capital that through its press lords and movie kings is painting the picture) in keeping the country poor by extracting vast fantastic profits from its enterprises, in organising the corruption of " pushover " progressive leaders ready to betray and the assassination of the stubborn ones, and in frustrating by promoting factionalism the national movements that represent the ceaseless aspiration of the Mexican people toward overthrowing the Spanish, French and now United States and British tyrants, who have successively exploited them. A terrific flood of this propaganda is on. The endeavour is, of course, to destroy sympathy for Mexico in British and United States democracies by conveying that the expropriation of the

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oil companies is not something rendered inevitable by the conduct of the " victims " themselves (oh dear no, no one is supposed to look into that) but just a general result of the bandit habits of the naughty Mexicans (always stealing somebody else's property) that might equally have happened to you or me, i.e., it is your and my quarrel and we must stick up for our imperialists.

But let us look further into this matter to see what the quarrel is really about.

Of all the foreign exploitation in Mexico, oil is near the top for money-making. Note these figures: The average production of a worker in oil in Mexico is 2,330 barrels; in U.S.A. 730 barrels. The average daily wage of a worker in oil in Mexico is 4.68 dollars; in U.S.A. 16.13 dollars. The taxation per barrel produced in Mexico is 1.20 dollars; in U.S.A. 4.10 dollars. Add to this that, reckoning Mexican Eagles'* charge for Mexican oil products outside Mexico as 100, the same company's charge for the same product inside Mexico (in the country and to the people it belongs to) is respectively 275 for gas oil, 295 for petrol, 440 for kerosine and 450 for lubricating oil—and we have a pretty type case of imperialist robbery beside which the slanderous caricature of the bandit with pistol and sombrero looks a small-timing simpleton.

For ten years past the oil workers have been striving to get improved conditions out of the companies. For ten years the companies have fought them with splitting and company unions. But despite these obstacles unity among the workers was at last reached in 1936 and a single union formed which, in Mexican law, obliges the employers to arrive at a collective agreement. After long negotiations a complex company agreement of 150 clauses was hammered down to eight. Two months' strike notice to enforce this was given by the oil workers. They asked 28 million pesos wage increases, paid holidays and health protection measures. In June, 1937, 17,000 workers came out. The strike was complete and with perfect discipline everything was brought to a standstill. The company offered 13 millions pesos declaring the full demands economically impossible to satisfy. Yet for the *nth* time they refused to produce proof of their contention from their accounts books. The oil workers' unions claiming that this plea by the companies raised political issues, called off the strike and asked for government investigation of the companies' ability to pay and arbitration by the Labour Tribunal. The Labour Tribunal award declared that the companies had recovered every penny of their invested capital more than ten years ago, and that their annual profits from 1934 to 1936 had been £4,400,000 (34 per cent. on invested capital). All the workers' demands were conceded by the Labour Tribunal. The companies appealed to the Supreme Court for an injunction to prevent application of the award. The Supreme Court unanimously refused the injunction and confirmed the verdict of the Tribunal. The companies declared they

*Gross profit in 1937 was £1,046,619.

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would not respect the verdict of the Supreme Court. It was then that the Mexican Government stepped and nationalised the companies.

What kind of government was it which took this bold line of action? Mexico has an unbroken revolutionary tradition and has had hitherto an unbroken tradition of revolutionary leaders corrupted in office. Even Porfirio Diaz, whose puppet dictatorship lasted 35 years, originally won office on a programme of no re-election of a retiring president, anti-clericalism and independence from foreign commercial interests. The Constitution contained many provisions of social justice, but no one allowed them to be put into effect. The fundamental basis of the Mexican situation is the exploitation by extraction of profits from all its native resources, oil, silver, power, soil (which is immensely rich) by Spanish German, Japanese, British and United States capital while 85 per cent. of the population is illiterate and the bulk living in virtual peonage subject to foreign and Mexican landed estate owners. Lazaro Cardenas, elected President in 1934, began by enforcing labour laws, deporting the ex-Presidents Calles, Portes Gil and Rodriquez (who had betrayed while in office and had begun organising fascist groups both within the Government Party and new splinter parties immediately they were out of office) and began to settle peasants on the land in accordance with the Constitution.

By November, 1936, he had already settled more peasants on nationalised estates than all his predecessor Presidents had done in the preceding seventeen years since the adoption of the Constitution.

Then came a period of doubt. The rock on which all progressive attempts in past days had foundered was the lack of mass popular organisations to guarantee the basis of social change. The Government Party, the N.R.P. (National Revolutionary Party), contained sharply reactionary elements. The fact that all Government officials compulsorily belonged to it is a sufficient pointer to its inadequately democratic structure. The bourgeoisie armed the "Camisas Doradas (Gilded Shirts), "Nationalist Youth", "Union of the Middle Classes", "Christeros", a "Social Democratic Party" (totally Fascist despite its chosen label) were bodies round which counter-revolution gathered. The strength of the reaction is shown by the fact that, in addition to three Fascist weeklies, six or seven daily papers in Mexico City support Franco. In Los Angeles and the lynch-law United States south, Rodriquez, Calles and Morones plotted as exiles. Neighbouring reactionary states such as Guatemala aided them. The Nazis imported arms through German trading firms. Cardenas' cabinet contained a military adventurer named Cedillo as Minister for Agriculture and, though he was kicked out, this would-be Franco retired to his estate of San Luis Potosi and openly organised a private army including German planes and artillery, declaring brazenly, "So long as the Government does not attack me, I will not attack the Government." The National Army was largely officered by sons of the "best people"

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whose natural sympathy lay with their relatives, the big estate owners. Cardenas seemed to hesitate to tackle Cedillo. Nor did he face the big agrarians in Sonora and in such states as Yucatan, who slaughtered and burned school teachers and active members of the peasants' union. Land settlement was held up.

The labour movement, which had attained formal unity in the C.T.M. (Mexican Confederation of Labour) was weakened by dissension in many areas, including even Mexico City, several unions would exist within one industry, which while all members of the C.T.M. had not unified among themselves. The agrarian reforms ran into the inevitable snag, viz., that it is not enough to settle peasants on the land, they cannot compete with big estates and their methods unless they receive credits for seeds and machinery, and even then they are lost unless collectivisation is developed.

An attempt was made to forge the mass organisational basis to face these tendencies to reaction and fascism and to support further advance in a Popular Front. At first attempted in a sectarian manner—for which the small and young Communist Party shared responsibility—it led to a split in the C.T.M. and a walk-out of the best elements. Election confusion was caused by peasant candidatures which were run against the National Revolutionary Party.

With 1937 came a change of tactics by the militants, the building of the Popular Front within the existing organisation, and from this an entire transformation has come upon the scene.

Unity has been achieved in the trade union field, where formerly there were three trade union federations (the other two were the C.R.O.M. and the C.G.T.) there is now one, uniting 700,000 members. Numerous victories and social improvements have been won. The agrarian programme has been proceeded with, the first estates to be settled being those in Yucatan where murders by the landowners had taken place. More than 24 million acres had been allotted to peasants by the end of 1937. Credits were granted and collectivisation developed. The railways were nationalised and are administered by officials nominated by their employees' unions. In an historic manifesto Cardenas announced the transformation of the N.R.P. to the "Party of Workers, Peasants and Soldiers". He announced the ending of compulsory dues paying by Government employees, its new basis was to be entirely voluntary. He appealed for membership particularly to peasants, to all manual workers, whose "practice of solidarity, trade union discipline, collective spirit and numerical strength can contribute to defend their revolutionary gains," to women, that they may "eliminate the traditional injustice of relegating them to inferior positions," to intellectual workers "to defend the weaker parts of society against despotism and oppression," to youth "who represent the maximum of enthusiasm and unselfishness," and to soldiers, who must not be "a special group, representing the views of a caste, but

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are citizens with discipline and patriotism, endorsing the majority and the Constitution." Soldiers take part in meetings and demonstrations. Cardenas has sanctioned the arming of the settled peasants. The C.T.M. was able to organise 200,000 armed and disciplined workers to demonstrate last year on the occasion of the Mexican revolutionary anniversary on November twentieth. Cardenas' reforms are supported also by the Peasants, Confederation, by a United Socialist Youth mustering 50,000 students and the 20,000 strong Communist Party.

The force behind the advance of Mexico to-day is shown by its general international stand without fear for Spain, and for Abyssinia at Geneva and particularly by the events which followed the nationalisation of the oil companies. Despite the melancholy forebodings, not only of the foreign press but of the Mexican bourgeoisie, at the transference, the enterprises stopped, and resumed again after exactly half an hour's interruption in the most orderly manner possible, their output having been maintained.

Though full compensation to the oil shareholders was immediately pledged by President Cardenas, and though they have not a legal leg to stand on for the nationalised companies are fully Mexican in law, the British and United States Governments immediately intervened on behalf of the chief shareholders in them, Standard Oil and Royal Dutch Shell. Runs on the banks were organised, the United States Government cancelled contract for the purchase of Mexican silver, and an endeavour was thus made to disrupt Mexican economy, send prices soaring and hence, by creating difficulties for the masses which Cardenas' Government could not resolve, destroy its mass support.

The United States Government forebore to challenge Mexican legal right to affect the nationalisation, but the British did not hesitate to do so, blustering and without attempting the least legal basis for the contention. Mexico rebutted the British note and, when Chamberlain offensively demanded instant payment of a few thousand pounds due on an old agreement a mere matter of weeks in arrears Cardenas replied, paying at once, withdrawing diplomatic representation, and alluding to other countries, with wider financial resources than small Mexico, which are not always to time in the payment of instalments of their debts.

It is entertaining in this connection to read that the United States Government, seriously alarmed at the American repercussions of the armed intervention in Mexico, expects the British Government to organise in an effort to rescue the lost exploitation paradise of the oil companies, it is suggested by the *Manchester Guardian* New York correspondent on May 27, about to adopt a novel scheme, i.e., to sell cheaply to the Mexican Government negotiable securities, into which the British Government is bound by Anglo-American agreement to transform the war debt on request, representing a part of the war debt equivalent to the British oil interests. Then Mexico will obtain for a negligible sum and pay in securities which are presumably of

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par value as between the British Government and its oil pets.

That the alarm is justified already by present developments is supported elsewhere in the same article which states " that there are already one or more revolts in progress in various parts of the country encouraged or subsidised by outside sources." The C.T.M. has published documentary proofs of British complicity in the supply of arms to Cedillo, and the care with which the latter's rebellion is being crushed (at the moment of writing Cedillo is a fugitive in the mountains having lost his troops and his city) indicates the overwhelming advance achieved by unity, the speed of development of social consciousness in the army, and arming of the trade union and peasant masses, since a year ago when Cardenas hesitated to tackle him though he had far less foreign support.

Let no mistake be made, however. The National Government will not abandon the position so lightly. The forces behind Chamberlain will not boggle at making Mexico a new Spain. The Cedillo fiasco is merely a beginning, like that of Sanjurjo in the Spain of 1931. A few days ago a big circulation Sunday paper came out openly with an article " Yellow is our Colour " in which, after using the Franco murder of British seamen and the Brazilian repudiation of payments to Britain to inflame the readers' jingo resentment, it made the bare-faced lying statement that the oil interests in Mexico had been confiscated without offer of compensation, it pledged exemplary action "soon" to protect them.

After all, Cardenas' measures against the oil companies—nationalisation with compensation—is not even " Bolshevism ", it is a perfect piece of declared Labour Party policy. What alternative would the Labour Party have suggested ? Dissolve the Supreme Court, abolish the Labour Tribunal, revoke the Constitution and shoot down the workers ? Hardly. Then why silence ? Is there anyone in Transport House whose solidarity is not with Mexico, putting into practice Labour policy, but with the circles in Britain lying and preparing intervention against it ?

In this situation the duty of the labour movement is to dissociate itself as publicly as possible from the notes issued by the Government on behalf of " Britain "—the Labour Party has notably failed in the House of Commons in this respect—to associate itself with its brother Mexican socialists and trade unions, and to popularise their achievements among the public in Britain is plain. Only such a campaign can prevent ultimate British intervention. It is a matter which far transcends local issues for a small people in a transatlantic corner. As Lombardo Toledano, President of the C.T.M., said at a meeting in Paris called by the Paris Trades Council, " In Mexico we do not think we are fighting the fight only of the Mexican people. Spain teaches all of us. Fascism is on a world scale, and if we do not advance against it, we shall very soon find ourselves forced to fight anyway, defending ourselves against its attacks."

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The Advance of Socialism

BY SAMUEL MEEKIN

[*The following article is reproduced from* SAINT MUNGO, *the organ of the Glasgow Branch of the Union of Postal Workers, as a striking example of simple and clear presentation of Soviet achievements which appeared to the* LABOUR MONTHLY *to deserve a wider public*].

THE AMAZING ADVANCE of Soviet Russia in practically every sphere of activity is daily becoming more pronounced. Even many of the consistent traducers of the U.S.S.R. are painfully becoming aware of a fact plainly obvious to any honest observer. Milestone after milestone of progress has been achieved by the toilers of Russia in the struggle towards the free Communist State.

But what is the present social structure of the U.S.S.R.? Joseph Stalin stated in an interview with the American journalist, Roy Howard :

" The social organisation which we have created may be called a Soviet socialist organisation, not entirely completed, but fundamentally a socialist organisation of society. The foundation of this society is public property."

And the 8th Congress of Soviets reported :—

". . . Thus, the exploitation of man by man has been abolished, and the socialist ownership of the implements and means of production has been established as the unshakable foundation of our Soviet society. We have now a new, socialist economy, which knows neither crises nor unemployment, poverty nor ruin, and which provides citizens with every opportunity to lead a prosperous and cultured life. The *class structure* of our society has changed also. The landlord class was liquidated with the ending of the civil war. The other exploiting classes have shared a similar fate—the capitalist class in the sphere of industry ; the kulaks, in agriculture ; the merchants and profiteers, in trade . . . There remain only the workers, the peasants, and the intelligentsia."

The dream of progressive mankind, the ending for ever of the exploitation of man by man, has been achieved by the world's first Worker's Republic. In a land area over one-sixth of the globe's surface, the mineral resources of the earth ; the waterways, forests, and factories ; the transports by air, rail, and water ; the banks, mines, postal and other communications, are the property of the State—and as the Socialist State is an instrument of the people, they become the property of the people.

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The ending of exploitation brought in its train the disappearance of unemployment. Insecurity, perpetual fear of the labour scrap-heap, is now unknown in a land of 180 millions. To-day, every citizen of the U.S.S.R. is guaranteed the right to work, at wages which increase with every industrial advance ; holidays with full pay ; free medical attention. Pensions and schools are free. The door to the University is wide open, which results in the third strata of Soviet society, the intelligentsia, being drawn from the workers and peasants. Equal wages are paid for equal work, irrespective of age or sex.

Throughout the fifty nationalities in the eleven republics which comprise the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics the barriers of sex, race, and creed have been swept away. Women are free, socially and economically, and prostitution has disappeared. In the New Constitution, it is written : " Women in the U.S.S.R. are accorded equal rights with men in all fields of economic, state, cultural, social, and political life." Since the days of November, 1917, when thousands of women fought shoulder to shoulder with the men of the Red Army, women of the Socialist Republic have occupied important Government posts. Lenin's sister, a devoted revolutionary, became a member of the Soviet Control Commission before she died ; there was Alexandra Kollontai, Minister to Sweden ; while Lenin's widow, the famous Nadezhda Krupskaya, is at present an Assistant People's Commissar of Education. Ability opens every door to the Soviet women. Many have gained distinction in executive positions ; others are making careers as engineers and aviators, architects and scientists. Socialist Society, by destroying the inequality of the sexes, has demonstrated that women are the equal of men in almost every sphere of activity. The fallacy of the " weaker sex " no longer exists in Russia ! Conscious that the wealth they produce is theirs, that each improvement in technique and efficiency broadens their horizon and contributes to a fuller and a happier life, the Russian people forge ahead in the greatest social experiment of all time. Truly, when relieved of the restriction and degradation imposed by the exploitation of human labour, man's capacity for performance is stupendous.

Last year, Soviet airmen, in Soviet-built machines, flew over the North Pole to America ; Russian scientists pitched their tents on ice-floes in the Arctic Circle, and collected important scientific data. During the two completed Five-Year Plans, miracles of construction have been achieved. On the fringe of the Arctic Ocean, where no human being had ever trod before, there now stands a perfectly planned town of 100,000 inhabitants. In Lugansk, in the Ukraine—now renamed after the commissar for Defence—the world's largest locomotive works has been built, a factory which produces all its own requirements. And at the Paris Exhibition last year I saw in the Soviet Pavilion a magnificent example of the work of the motor-car industry, which has been created during the two Five-Year Plans. Electrification of the

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Soviet Union saw the construction, with the harnessing of the Dnieper, of the biggest hydraulic power station in Europe. Moscow's " Metro," Russia's first underground railway, was completed in four years, and is considered the finest in the world. The Moscow-Volga Canal is but the first instalment of the " Greater Volga " plan, embodied in the Third Five-Year Plan, to conquer this river. When finished, the thirteen hydraulic power stations of the " Greater Volga " will have a capacity of ten million kilowatts. In the South, a huge canal is being built to connect the Volga with the Black Sea ; while in the North the Sheksna River is linked with the Baltic and the White Sea. Thus, there will be eventually a tremendous waterway stretching from the Far North to the Black Sea. A further five million hectares of land will be irrigated in the process, and, in conjunction with the Greater Volga scheme, cheap electrical energy will be provided for a population of 70 millions.

These instances of the success, and of the wonder, of Socialist Planned Economy, provide but a glimpse of the glorious future ahead of the Soviet Union, if Fascism and monopoly-capitalism can be prevented from plunging the world into war. While the capitalist world shakes with recurring crises and slumps, Russia, her forces of production divorced from the criminal rings, trusts and stock exchanges, and harnessed for the common good, has laid the foundations for her ideal, the Communist Society. It is almost incredible to think that it is but twenty years since the Revolution, and barely sixteen since the young Red Army cleared the country of its Kolchaks and Denikens. A devastated country, famine-ridden and impoverished by Imperialist war, civil war, and wars of intervention, had to be reconstructed and Socialism introduced. To-day, Russia's industrial production is first in Europe, and second in the world ; by the end of the Third Five-Year Plan, she will be at the top of the list with the U.S.A. To-day, while the cost-of-living is soaring in Capitalist Society, it is decreasing in the U.S.S.R., *and wages are increasing*. Decreased costs, increased purchasing power—a phenomenon which the world of profit-seeking just cannot understand !

There are, of course, the self-appointed critics and the pessimists. Russia has become a bureaucracy ; Socialism has been scrapped ; the Revolution has been betrayed. How often have we not heard this parrot-cry ? When Lenin advocated " All Power to the Soviets " he was gulity of treachery to Socialism ; Brest-Litovsk, and the Russo-German Agreement, signified the act of traitors to the Revolution ; when the New Economic Policy was introduced it was the end of Socialism ; the military pact with capitalist France and becoming a member of the League of Nations demonstrated beyond all doubt that Russia had " degenerated " ; and, as for the purge—well, that proved finally that the " real " revolutionaries, the genuine Marxists, were once again correct in their diagnosis—as they had been " correct " for twenty years. And yet, to-day, Socialism reigns supreme in the U.S.S.R.

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Russian policy, under the leadership of the Communist Party and the wise guidance of Stalin, has never wavered from the path it set along during the stormy days of 1917. The higher Communism is the goal. It is merely adapting itself to the changing world conditions preserving itself while it gains strength sufficient to defend its hard-won liberties.

Lenin's widow, in describing the great revolutionary's arrival in Petrograd in April, 1917, says :—" Standing on a truck, deeply moved by the thousands who had come to greet him, Lenin uttered that which stirred him most of all, that which had been the supreme dream of his life : ' Long live the Socialist Revolution ! ' "

Let us echo the words of Lenin.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Lenin on Trotsky and Bukharin

V. I. Lenin: Selected Works, Vols. 9 *and* 10. (Lawrence and Wishart, 5s. each.)

THE FIRST OF these latest two volumes in the authorised edition of Lenin's selected works is most timely. It contains the principal speeches and articles of Lenin in the course of the famous Trade Union discussion in Russia in the winter of 1920-21. I said "famous," but I doubt whether this extremely significant episode in the life of the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet Republic is much more than a name to Marxists in this country. Yet, apart from the struggle against the "Left" Communists in the early part of 1918, there is nothing of greater importance for the understanding of the deviations which later led Trotsky, Bukharin and others away from the working class into the camp of the agents of Fascism. To read Lenin on this eighteen-year-old discussion is, in fact, to get an essential background on the latest triumph of Soviet justice in bringing to book the now self-confessed Trotskyite-Bukharinite spies and traitors.

The heart of the matter was simple, and touched the roots of Marxism —was the question of the position of the Trade Unions in the transition from "War Communism" to the period of economic reconstruction to be approached abstractly, from the standpoint of the "general principle" (this, says Lenin, is Trotsky's "fundamental mistake"), or from the standpoint of a realistic, painstaking, accurate analysis of the facts and their relationships? Only the second procedure is scientific, is the way of Marxism; and only so could the Soviet Republic, Lenin stressed, avoid mere "bureaucratic project-hatching," "empty and vapid word-spinning," and prevent itself slipping back "from living work to the lifeless scholastics" in which Trotsky and Bukharin were revelling.

Trotsky's highly bureaucratic, parade-ground approach to the Trade Unions (which he wanted to "shake up," like a Prussian sergeant-major tackling a recruit squad) was typified in his claim that "it is not the rôle of the Trade Unions in a workers' State to protect the material and spiritual interests of the working class." First, said Lenin, the Soviet Republic was *not* "a workers' State"; and, he added:

> Our present State is such that the entirely organised proletariat must protect itself, and we must utilise these workers' organisations *for the purpose of protecting the workers from their own State and in order that the workers may protect our State.* Both forms of protection are achieved by means of the peculiar interweaving of our State measures with our agreement, our coalescence with our Trade Unions.

(I italicise the sentence which illustrates in a flash Lenin's concrete dialectical treatment of a point which was throwing the abstract, eclectic Trotsky and Bukharin into hopeless ideological confusion.)

The reader will note Lenin's particularly sharp attack on the "factional" character of Trotsky's pronouncements, which "distracted" the Party "from businesslike, practical, economic and productive work . . . . in order to rectify political and theoretical errors." How grotesque appear the vulgar pictures of Trotsky's supposed eminence during the Revolution when

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contrasted with Lenin's denunciation (January, 1921) of Trotsky's "one-sidedness, infatuation, exaggeration and obstinacy!"

Nor can the most hardened grizzler over the Moscow trials fail to be impressed by Lenin's excoriation of Bukharin, a prophetic excoriation of a future enemy of the Soviet people. Examining Bukharin's "acme of *ideological* disintegration," Lenin said bluntly: "we must, once again, at least at a Party meeting, say 'Fewer verbal twists, comrade N. I. Bukharin, it will be more beneficial for you, for theory and for the republic.'" Bukharin had made proposals that the Trade Unions should appoint the managers of Soviet industry, proposals representing "a complete rupture with Communism and transition to the position of Syndicalism," a deviation "*which leads to the fall of the dictatorship of the proletariat . . . . to the downfall of the Soviet Government*" (my italics). Noting Bukharin's "softness" (on which "any 'unprincipled' person, any 'demagogue,' can make any impression he likes"), Lenin pointedly concluded that "there is an objective logic in factional struggles which inevitably leads even the best of people—if they persist in occupying a wrong position—to a position which actually differs in no way from unprincipled demagogy."

Bukharin, who claimed that he functioned as a "buffer" between the position of Trotsky and that of Lenin in this discussion, sought to expound his attitude theoretically; all this amounted to was the statement that "neither the political nor the economic factor should be thrust aside." Upon which Lenin's comment was:

> The theoretical essence of the mistake which comrade Bukharin makes here is that he substitutes eclecticism for the dialectical relations between politics and economics (which Marxism teaches us). "Both the one and the other," "on the one hand and on the other hand"—such is Bukharin's theoretical position. This is exactly what eclecticism is. Dialectics demand the all-sided consideration of relationships in their concrete development and not the pulling of a piece out of one thing and a piece out of another.

"All-sidedness" and "concreteness" in analysis; without that there is no Marxism. The reader can test for himself just how the lack of this is to-day responsible for the confusion and disruption caused by our "r-r-r-revolutionaries" and "pure" Socialists and anti-People's Front-ers. And in this connection there are other passages in these present volumes that are enlightening. This, for instance:

> The greatest danger, perhaps the only danger, that confronts a genuine revolutionary is exaggeration of revolutionariness, forgetting the limits and conditions in which revolutionary methods are appropriate and can be successfully employed.

That is quoted from the article "The Importance of Gold" (written November, 1921) in which Lenin explained how and when revolutionaries need to be "reformist." Or take this comment on the difficulties and dangers of the New Economic Policy in the Political Report to the Eleventh Congress of the Bolshevik Party in March, 1922:

> To rely on firmness of convictions, loyalty, and other excellent spiritual qualities, is not being serious in politics. A small number of people may possess excellent spiritual qualities, but the issues of history are decided by huge masses which, if the small number of people do not suit them, sometimes treat the small number none too politely.

Communists must therefore face the problem "Who is leading whom?" Were they leading—by making themselves "cultured" and businesslike administrators—or were they being led? To think, Lenin went on, "of building Communist society exclusively with the hands of the Communists is childish, absolutely childish." And in a different connection—the April, 1922 meeting of the Three Internationals in Berlin—note this warning against "exclusiveness":

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> Communists must not stew in their own juice but learn how to penetrate into prohibited premises where the representatives of the bourgeoisie exercise influence over the workers ; and in this they must not hesitate to make certain sacrifices and not be afraid to make mistakes, which are inevitable, at first, in every new and difficult undertaking. The Communists who do not want to understand this and who do not want to learn how to do this cannot hope to win the majority among the workers ; at all events, they hinder and retard the work of winning this majority. And for Communists, and all genuine adherents of the workers' revolution, this is absolutely unpardonable.

It is not possible, in conclusion, to do more than briefly indicate the exceptional richness of the material in Volume 9. On N.E.P. there is the full text of the pamphlet "The Food Tax" (a much-abbreviated version was a feature of the first number of the LABOUR MONTHLY in July, 1921), and the extremely important Report to the All-Russian Congress of Political Education Departments in October, 1921. Study of these will make clear the essential line which, operated under the leadership of Lenin and later of Stalin, was able triumphantly to "transform the Russia of NEP into the Russia of Socialism." The nature of competition in the building of Socialism, and the character of Socialist labour, are covered in a special section. Extreme practicality is the mark of a series of documents on the fight against bureaucracy and red tape (see especially the "Letter to A.D. Tsurupa"). Problems of Socialist construction and the cultural revolution are illuminated in the group of superb articles—"Better Fewer, But Better," "On Co-operation," "Pages from a Diary"—written in the opening months of 1923, Lenin's last work before his final illness. Typical, too, is the note of 1918 on "The Character of Our Newspapers" ("Less political fireworks. Less intellectual arguments. Get closer to life").

Volume 10 is devoted to the Communist International, from the outlining of the need for a new, Third International in the spring of 1917, to the noted "Report" at the Fourth Congress of the C.I. in 1922—Lenin's last appearance at an international gathering. In addition to the principal theses adopted at the Second Congress in 1920, with Lenin's important interventions at the Second and Third Congresses, here is the text of the fundamental "Left-Wing Communism" and of numerous expository articles and letters ; it is a little surprising that the "Letter to Sylvia Pankhurst," of major interest for the establishment of the Communist Party in Britain, is not included.

ALLEN HUTT.

English History

A People's History of England by A. L. Morton. (Victor Gollancz. 8s. 6d. Left Book Club Edition, 2s. 6d.)

ENGLISH HISTORY IS in a bad way. There are innumerable specialist researchers, grubbing up their bits of detail, who have no conception of the extent to which their work is undermining traditional views ; there are innumerable popularisers, purveying historical pornography ; and there are a very few people who try to mediate between the specialist and the public, to bring real historical training and judgment to bear on the task of revaluing traditional views of history in the light of modern research. Many are coming to conclude that this can only be done satisfactorily if the past is studied with the apparatus of Marxism. Much of the detail unearthed of late years makes nonsense of old Whig interpretations, and is forcing Marxist conclusions on unwilling historians. The future of historical writing is with the Marxist.

Yet there are dangers in writing a Marxist history of England just now.

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So little conscious thinking has been done along these lines that there is a risk that the result might contain lots of Marxism but very little history—might be a book that the academic historian can sniff at and disregard. The great triumph of A. L. Morton's *A People's History of England* is that the academic historian cannot pooh-pooh it. Although it modestly " makes no pretence of being the result of original research," the book is in fact based on wide reading, and is written with extreme care to avoid overstatement, very revolutionary but unprovable hypotheses. The result is an exceedingly stimulating work which fulfils a double purpose. It is a very good introduction for the person who from being badly taught has acquired a distaste for history, as something irrelevant to urgent contemporary issues: it will be equally valuable in suggesting new and exciting ideas to students conscious of the defects, the class and nationalist bias, under which orthodox English history labours.

Morton's caution is not the result of inadequate knowledge, but of knowing enough to be aware of the limits of what he knows. There is a confidence based on real understanding and insight in his judgments. " Magna Carta has been rightly regarded as a turning point in English history, but almost always for wrong reasons." (p. 83). " Both the chaos and the prosperity of the Fifteenth Century were equally real and arose from a common cause, the transition from feudal and bourgeois society " (p. 133). One needs to be very sure of oneself to get away with remarks like that. Morton has a gift of clear exposition, an eye for the significant, which is most illuminating in the middle ages, the period to which Marxists have given least attention. He brings home as none of his predecessors have done the social importance, *e.g.*, of the hide (pp. 36-7); the influence of the introduction of Roman Christianity on property; of the Crusades on municipal history, on trading relations between England and Italy ; the importance of the monastries in the latter ; the economic basis of " maintenance." He continually brings to the fore the connections between economic and social and religious history, normally slurred over. This is particularly well done in the transitional centuries in which one section of the feudal landowners still " looked to war and politics as their natural activity," whilst others " were growing content to live on their estates and make the largest possible income from them," notably by the wool trade (pp. 95-6), later in the clothing industry. "They had a far greater community of interests with the merchants who also prospered from this trade than with the great barons " (p. 98). This is emphasized as one of the fundamental peculiarities in English history, influential alike in the Hundred Years' War and the Wars of the Roses, leading to the rise of this alliance of merchant and progressive gentry to influence under the Tudor monarchy, to the taking over of power in the civil war. Pointing out how these classes benefited from Henry VIII's confiscations of monastic estates, Morton stresses the importance of anti-catholicism in their development—" The defeat of the Armada is a turning point in the internal history of Engand as well as in foreign affairs. It was the merchants, with their own ships and their own money, who had won the victory, and they had won it in spite of the half-heartedness and ineptitude of the Crown and Council. . . . The war with Spain, therefore, can best be understood as the first phase in the English Revolution . . . It was a defeat for feudal reaction in Europe ; . . . and the classes inside England which defeated Philip were exactly those which afterwards led the opposition to Charles " (p. 197). Morton has as good a brief summary of the causes of the French revolution as is to be found anywhere.—" Without colonies the State became top-heavy and was perpetually on the verge of bankruptcy. At the same time the French bourgeoisie benefited, though to a less degree than their English rivals, from the general

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expansion of trade that followed the opening of the world to European exploitation and from the profits that even an unsuccessful war brings to this class. The result was a rising and ambitious capitalist class face to face with a discredited and bankrupt autocracy" (p. 313).

In what will be for many readers the most interesting chapters of the book the author traces the growing consciousness of working-class struggle, from organised poaching to organised political and industrial action. He emphasizes what tends to be obscured by liberal historians—that much of the "humanitarian" legislation of the Nineteenth Century was the product of working-class pressure and divisions in the ruling class. Tory landlords agitated for factory acts: liberal industrialists for "cheap corn." The Education Act of 1870 "was urgently demanded by the requirements of industry" (p. 407). It was because "pestilence could not be confined to the slums" that public health became a state concern (p. 408). And it is no discredit to the genuine humanitarians that "profitable as the slave trade proved during the Eighteenth Century, its suppression in the Nineteenth Century was even more profitable." In the course of hunting down slaves the foundation of British power in West Africa was laid (p. 467). The Factory Acts stimulated invention and concentration of capital, helped the larger concern to drive the smaller out of the market (p. 370). The repeal of the Corn Laws had a similar effect on agriculture, increased efficiency, capitalisation, profits (p. 396). Meanwhile, accompanying these concessions came "the unobtrusive strengthening of the state apparatus"—*e.g.*, by the creation of a police force (p. 373). Yet the author's attitude to reformism is not merely negative. He correctly points out the advantages gained by the working class from even a limited extension of the franchise (pp. 406-7), and is very sensible in assessing Cobbett's rôle.

Morton describes the suicidal change in England's exports from consumers' goods to capital goods, and has some telling things to say on imperialism. "Ireland was important to the English ruling classes only as a source of cheap food: for the last hundred years, no matter what form the exploitation has taken, this has been its essence" (p. 441). "The million and a half people who died [between 1845 and 1850] did not die of famine, but were killed by rent and profit" (p. 442). The continuous connection between the most conscious elements of the English working class movement and the Irish revolutionaries is repeatedly shown. The progressive impoverishment of India under British rule is noted (p. 449), and the change in policy towards the native rulers, who have been bought over since they headed the Mutiny of 1857. Similar tactics are illustrated from South Africa after the Boer War: "Boers and British together were only a small white minority in the middle of a negro population, and for this reason, once the supremacy of British Imperialism had been established, it was necessary to do all that was possible to conciliate the defeated" (p. 472). Morton firmly rebuts the legend of German war guilt (p. 501) and exposes the fact that "the invasion of Belgium came as a veritable godsend" to the rulers of Britain. Throughout he devotes serious attention to military technique and its influence on social history. "The decisive technical advance which had robbed the knight of his superiority was not . . . the invention of gunpowder, but the longbow" (p. 111). "The introduction of the hand gun coincides with the decline of the yeomanry in England" (p. 112). "Wars were immensely profitable to the English financiers and contractors, and by adding to their wealth, consolidated the triumph of Whiggery" (p. 282).

In fact, this is a book distinguished by realism, historical imagination, and many-sidedness. Vividly and attractively written, it is just what a people's history ought to be. But it is not only that. Its vigour, independence, sanity

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and insight make it a work from which the professional has a great deal to learn. One may wish to argue points of detail—that is inevitable in " an essay in historical interpretation " on this scale. But for the achievement as a whole one can feel nothing but admiration. Its " interpretations " will have to be reckoned with, and are bound to have a great influence on all those interested in history whose minds are not closed by prejudice. That being so it is all the more regrettable that the book is marred by so many careless misprints.

CHRISTOPHER HILL.

Soviet East Awakes

Women in the Soviet East by Fannina Halle. (Secker and Warburg, 15s.)

THIS IS A fascinating book which gives, with many graphic details, stories of the life of the women in Asiatic Russia and an outline of the terrific struggle of the Soviet authorities to raise them from the abyss of ignorance and degradation in which they have lived for thousands of years.

It is said that the Kalmuchis, who live on the northern border of the Caspian, have not washed for three thousand years, their women have their babies alone in the open on the bare earth, wrap them unwashed in dirty lambskins and lose 75 per cent. of their children through dirt and disease. Among such primitive peoples as these it is clear that the first need is for cultural propaganda, soap, medical and midwifery services. The subordination of eastern women to their parents, husbands and husband's families, long-hallowed by religion and deeply-rooted custom, has become so much an integral part of the lives of most of the Asiatic tribes in the Soviet East that it was very difficult at first to persuade the women themselves to understand or take advantage of the freedom and protection which the Soviet decrees gave them.

The first steps towards the emancipation of the Eastern women had to be taken by Russian women who sacrificed their comfort, and sometimes even their lives, to go and work in the Women's Sections in the Eastern Republics. It was no good merely to make marriage by purchase or by capture, etc., and the overwork and ill-treatment of girl brides by their husband's relatives, illegal, it was necessary to carry to every distant village and nomad's tent the message that women suffering from these old evil customs could claim protection from the Women's Sections and the Soviet courts. A proclamation of freedom is of no value to a slave if he is shut into a dark cellar and cannot hear it. So courageous Russian women had to have the murderous hostility of Mohammedan priests and influential *beys* (landowners or rich merchants), learn strange languages, themselves put on the parauja* in order to penetrate to the most inaccessible places bringing messages of hope and freedom to the women.

Some of the theorisings of this author on questions of matriarchy and patriarchy are rather open to question, although space prevents their discussion here. But the real value of her book is its story of the spread of culture, cleanliness and learning to the Soviet East, the encouragement by the Soviet authorities of equality between men and women, of improved agricultural and industrial methods, and their gradual introduction of a new way of living. The difficulties they were up against, the new and ingenious way which had to be found of combating the prejudice and ignorance of centuries are well and entertainingly described.

JOAN BEAUCHAMP.

*Heavy Veil covering the head and face and falling to the ground.

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The Workless

Men Without Work. (Cambridge University Press, 7s. 6d.)

THE PILGRIM TRUST is a body which distributes funds for philanthropic objects. Anxious to know whether their dispensation of charity in the field of unemployment really did have the effect of " doing good " for the unemployed, the Trustees appointed a committee of investigators to enquire into " all the symptoms, moral, social and economic, of unemployment." Three main questions which the committee sought an answer to were : " Who are the unemployed ? " " What kind of men are those out of work, and why has the disaster of unemployment overtaken these and not others ? " The report, published recently under the title *Men Without Work*, describes the social and domestic conditions of the unemployed and contains very useful evidence of the terrible effects of unemployment in the lives of the worker ; evidence obtained by first-hand contact with unemployed families by the investigators.

The human effects of unemployment form the main subject of this study. The book is chiefly descriptive and falls short of any attempt to examine the causes of unemployment, or to suggest any effective remedy even for the poverty which it reveals, beyond the extension and development of social service centres—including occupational centres—and unemployed clubs for encouraging the unemployed to engage in cultural pursuits and so take advantage of their " leisure " time.

Like all persons who approach the problem of unemployment as a subject for charity, the Pilgrim Trust investigators completely omit any criticism of the system which creates unemployment, or of the disastrous policy of the National Government which has plunged anxious men and women who are desperately seeking work into appalling conditions of destitution. Consequently, the book is completely devoid of any call for action against the problem itself.

Beyond recording present-day social and human conditions of large numbers of our fellow beings—which has already been made available from numerous sources, including medical officers of health reports—the book adds little to the literature on unemployment.

These are times when we should not only describe conditions but attack them fiercely, and urge action against those who stand in the way of improvement. But the reader would look in vain through the pages of this book for any such treatment of the subject.

After describing the serious physical effects of long unemployment and poverty—of mothers starving themselves in order to give their children a little better chance, of the danger to the health standards of future generations arising from families existing on an income which falls as much as 30 per cent. below bare minimum standards as prescribed by medical authorities—the authors of the report are bold enough to venture the suggestion that " the case against a reduction of existing unemployment allowances is unanswerable."

Whilst there is no serious attempt to examine the U.A.B. administration and the treatment of the unemployed under the Means Test, the Pilgrim investigators nevertheless have " formed the impression that on the whole, the Board's officers carry out their duty with tact and sympathy, but where there is a rooted objection to the principle (Means Test investigations) it is impossible to avoid causing distress by it."

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Must we conclude from this then, that there is no hardship in the actual Means Test which deprives the son or father of his earnings by making him keep his unemployed relative, but only in the idea of being subjected to an investigation? If this is what the Pilgrim Committee means then it is sheer nonsense. The hardship brought about by the Means Test is not simply psychological but physical, and accentuates the very conditions of poverty which they themselves describe in their book.

A third of the book is devoted to details about existing social service centres and unemployed clubs, and repeated references to the need for encouraging the unemployed to make the best use of their "leisure time." Leisure is a strange word to couple up with starvation.

The investigators found that the unemployed frequently spoke of their connections with the National Unemployed Workers' Movement and they found that "one or two had dropped out because they did not think it any use, but the majority of those who spoke about it evidently valued it." The opinion of the investigators, however, is that "the tendency of such organisations is with the younger men at least to encourage them not get to work." I presume that this deduction is made from the fact that the National Unemployed Workers' Movement spurns charity and demands that the State make proper provision for the unemployed. But in striking contrast to the inaction of charity organisations, the National Unemployed Workers' Movement constantly agitates for the provision of work at trade union wages, and a little enquiry into its literature or a talk with the branch committees would have readily revealed this. But there are none so blind as those who don't want to see.

From reading this book I gather the impression that there must have been definite restriction imposed upon the scope of the study; anxiety not to defend the powers that be, and perhaps a good deal of editorial blue-pencilling. The investigators must surely have formed more definite opinions on the subject of unemployment than have been stated in this book, and I would ask them to follow up with a second volume in which they "let themselves go" so that we may have a more concrete and fundamental treatment of the subject.

WAL HANNINGTON.

SHORTER NOTICES.

A Century of City Government by Shena D. Simon, M.A. (Allen and Unwin Ltd., 12s. 6d., 450 pp.)

Published during the Manchester Centenary year this book is a history of a century of City Government (1838-1938). It traces the way in which local government services have developed and claims to be the first attempt to look at a century of municipal development from the point of view of one representative authority, that of a large industrial city.

Materialism and Empirio-Criticism by V. I. Lenin. (Lawrence and Wishart, 10s. 6d., 384 pp.)

THIS FAMOUS WORK of Lenin on Marxist philosophy, Vol. XIII of the Collected Works, which has been out of print for some time, is now reprinted in a new translation following the Russian edition of 1936. The new English text has been carefully compared and checked with the Russian original by a number of Marxist authorities. Completely revised, edited and annotated this is the only edition authorised by the Lenin Institute, Moscow.

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Imperialism : A Study by J. A. Hobson. (Allen and Unwin, 8s. 6d., 386 pp.)

J. A. Hobson's well-known study of imperialism was published in 1902 and again in a revised edition in 1905. This is a third edition entirely revised and with a twenty-five page introduction by the author.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

Japan's Gamble in China. Freda Utley. (Secker and Warburg.) 6s. 302 pp.

The Plot Against the Soviet Union and World Peace. (Lawrence and Wishart.) 1s. 187 pp.

The Machinery of Socialist Planning. G. D. H. Cole. (Hogarth Press.) 2s. 6d. 80 pp.

Power and Glory. Karel Capek. (Allen and Unwin.) 3s. 6d. 97 pp.

Facing Mount Kenya. Jomo Kenyatta. (Secker and Warburg.) 12s. 6d. 339 pp.

American Testament. Joseph Freeman. (Gollancz.) 16s. 576 pp.

The Science of Society. J. Rumney, B.Sc., Ph.D. (Duckworth.) 3s. 6d. 125 pp.

The United Front. Georgi Dimitrov. (Lawrence and Wishart.) 6s. 287 pp.

Peace with the Dictators? Sir Norman Angell. (Hamish Hamilton.) 7s. 6d. 328 pp.

Economics. A General Textbook for Students. Frederick Benham. (Pitman.) 7s. 6d. 488 pp.

Reform Under Fire. Social Progress in Spain, 1931-1938. Margaret Stewart. (New Fabian Research Bureau.) 6d. 24 pp.

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